Why do some cultural groups achieve more than others?
How some groups outperform others

In 1986, historian Paul Kennedy published *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, in which he examined historical contexts that allowed certain “power centers” to rise and prosper before declining when they were unable to sustain the material/military cost of greatness. The work was a widely-acclaimed bestseller, as the author’s research gave much food for thought as to what constitutes effective nation-building.

Closely related, and one of humankind’s perpetual puzzles, is why some individuals and ethnic groups attain great heights when others, faced with the same obstacles and possessing similar talents, don’t rise at all. It’s a never-ending question that is often misunderstood, as it implies notions of racism, colonialism, domination.

Two professors, from Yale and Harvard, decided to pursue this intellectual minefield. They examined the socialization process of three successful groups — Jews, Mormons and Chinese immigrants. With groundbreaking research, they discovered the intricate social pressures underpinning both success and failure: a superiority complex, feelings of inferiority and impulse control or lack thereof. Learn more about their provocative work, *The Triple Package*, on page 11.

Our interviewee is Joyce Jenkins, an outstanding specialist on Asian cultures. Raised for the most part in Thailand, she was immersed early in Asian thinking and behavior. How she became one of Britain’s leading experts in Asian-Western relations is an amazing story and begins on page 3.

There are many other topics in the issue. Isabelle Risacher brilliantly dissects the Gallic mindset in “Five Tips on how to live and work with the French” (page 8). Matthew Hill provides a list of short, effective video clips for use in intercultural training (page 10). George Simons gives his insights on the books he’s read recently (page 17).

Finally, Dan MacLeod proposes a metaphor for people who wait — immigrants waiting for papers, those without work hoping for jobs… (page 13)

A lot to digest, but we’re sure you’ll enjoy this summer read.

Patrick Schmidt, Editor-in-chief
Interview with Joyce Jenkins

A remarkable bridgebuilder in Asian-Western relations

What happens to a child’s mind when brought up in a foreign culture? What are the rewards and challenges of a multicultural childhood? Research tells us that third-culture kids have a much broader worldview, making them more compassionate and understanding. Because they change environments often, they need to reach out and connect more, impelling them to be braver in social situations. And lastly, as they’ve learned to master new places, they are not afraid to take risks, juggling irreconcilable contradictions, trying something new.

But how does the mind react when a child learns radically different languages early in life such as Thai (a tonal language) and English (non-tonal). In a tonal system, the same sounds, pronounced at different pitches, can refer to different things. In a non-tonal one, pitch indicates emotion but not meaning. Now imagine being comfortable in both systems by the age of 11 (the end of the critical period).

Meet Joyce Jenkins. Her unique linguistic experience had such a huge impact on her outlook on life that she majored at university in both non-tonal and tonal languages: French, German, Chinese and Japanese. And it was no accident that, after her studies, she spent many years in Asia facilitating understanding between East and West. She’s currently based in the UK, sharing her intercultural experiences with a variety of institutions, from social groups to universities to companies. She’s also become very active in the intercultural field and was recently elected President of SIETAR Europa.

I had the pleasure of interviewing her and finding out more about her unique life journey.

When did you first experience cultural differences?
At age three, when my parents moved to Hyderabad, Pakistan. My father was working with the British Council and he got posted to the university to set up programs there. This was in 1963 and, of course, there wasn’t any of the intercultural training or preparation that we do for people now.

We stayed for about three years, then moved to Chiang Mai in northern Thailand, where my father worked at another university. The Vietnam War was in full swing and there were a lot of Americans based in Chiang Mai. And there were many education and development projects run by different countries, which made the area very international. I went to an international school run by American missionaries in Chiang Mai.

Although the language of instruction was English, everyone around was Thai. We had some local friends and, through them, I picked up the language. So I was involved in both communities. It was a great time. I have happy memories of exploring, bicycling off with friends in the surrounding villages.
Joyce Jenkins — continued

Joyce spent her childhood growing up in Chiang Mai, a quiet city in northern Thailand.

So, you grew up bilingually and biculturally.
Yes, you could say that. And everybody I knew spoke at least two languages, if not three. Some spoke German at home, English at school and Thai with their local friends. We sort of switched between languages. Apparently, I picked up a northern Thai accent.

When I was 11 my parents moved back to Scotland, where my family is from. I started secondary school and had to struggle with the cold climate, the school uniform...very different from the international culture in I was used to. I think we all, as a family, found it quite tough. And I didn't speak a word of Thai during my time in Scotland.

Six years later, my father was offered a job back in Thailand. When we moved to Bangkok, I couldn't remember a word of Thai. It was like noise. It seemed like I had forgotten it completely. But my Thai came back suddenly and unexpectedly. We'd been in the country a few weeks, in a hotel, waiting to move into our house. At breakfast, the waitress behind me was talking about my order--toast or cereal — and I turned around and, without realizing it, told her I was having toast. She said, “Oh, I didn’t know you spoke Thai.” It all came back.

I was there for two years, at the American international school. I suppose it was a sort of culture shock, moving from the British to the U.S. system. The American curriculum offered a broader range of subjects, which I really liked. But because I was going back to the UK to study, I had to prepare British A levels. It was quite an experience, two different education systems.

I went to the University of Edinburgh to study French, German and Chinese. In my second year, I got a place to study in Beijing for a year. From then on, Chinese became my major language.

Going to China was a real culture shock, both location-wise and language-wise. It was 1980, the Cultural Revolution had just ended and China was still difficult to get into. We were a group of 10 or 15 from different British universities and we stayed in the dormitories and studied Chinese language, history and culture.

It was a real eye-opener, to say the least. And it was quite complicated to travel, you had to get permits to go on trains, to visit cities, etc. We gradually persuaded the authorities to allow us to do some traveling and exploring. The very fact we had to deal with the bureaucracy forced me to converse in Chinese and, by the end of the year, I was able to speak it to the point of negotiating. Living for an extended period in another country and with significant interaction was a real transformation and had an impact on my perception.

Speaking Thai helped you learn Chinese more easily?
Thai is also a tonal language, so it helps with the concept. Unfortunately, each language has different tones and they don’t quite match up. Thai has a phonetic script, so it doesn’t help reading and writing Chinese characters. I remember saying to myself, there must be a trick to learn these characters. I asked my teacher, if it got easier and he said, “Oh yes, after 25 years.”

When you came back, did you finish your degree in Chinese?

Yes and no. In my Chinese studies, I wanted to focus on Tang poetry. But I discovered that, during the Cultural Revolution, the authorities had clamped down on people studying things like ancient poetry. The only major source of information was found in Japanese writings, which meant I had to start learning Japanese.

Knowing Chinese characters allowed me to learn Japanese script rather quickly, so I ended up with a degree (MA) in Chinese and Japanese. I was able to read Japanese but couldn’t really speak it. I thought this was really silly so after university, I decided to spend a year in the country. Later on, I lived three years in Japan.

Before that, I went back to Thailand — my parents were still there — and got various bits of work teaching and translating and also with a volunteer organization in a refugee camp, preparing people to go to Britain. That was the first time I really thought about the intercultural issue, thinking about my own culture, trying to make sense of it. It was a mindset shift, trying to help these refugees understand what people might think of them, and how they might perceive things differently, based on their cultural upbringing. I’m now working on a Master’s in intercultural communication, focusing on the impact of international experience at different ages and how that affects one’s awareness and cultural intelligence.

When did you first become aware of SIETAR?

It was when I was back in Japan. I was working in the executive education department of a car company. They asked me to design programs to help Japanese going to the U.S. and Europe and foreigners arriving in Japan. I started to research a bit more and became acquainted with the formal concept of interculturalism. In those days, you went to a library to look things up and actually wrote to people. I came across the work of Nancy Adler, synergy...There were a number of people in Japan researching in that area and I used their insights to design the programs. It was then I came across SIETAR as an organization.

What did you do after your stay in Japan?

I came back to Britain with my husband, who I’d had met during my year in China. He’s British, born in Malaysia and brought up Uganda. He too was interested in Chinese and Japanese management styles. When we returned to the
Joyce Jenkins
— continued

Working and living in the multi-ethnic city of Singapore enhanced Joyce’s understanding of Asia.

UK, Japanese companies were beginning to invest a lot there. Bath-Spa University had a particular interest in Japanese and Chinese business relationships and we were hired to develop and run executive leadership programs with a strong cultural component. The objective was to help British business people who were going to Japan or working at Japanese companies in the UK.

Some 10 years later, we were approached to work at INSEAD in Fontainebleau, France — again with a Japanese and Chinese business focus. After two years, we transferred to the INSEAD campus in Singapore, where we stayed for 10 years. We’ve been based back in the UK for nine years now, but increasingly work in the Asia-Pacific region.

What is your approach when preparing people to go abroad?
When coaching or training a group, you have to remember that not everybody has had intercultural experiences like your own. I’m of the opinion that we must try to connect with the participants’ perspective and build from there. What I like to point out is that everybody has had intercultural experiences, even if they don’t recognize them as such, for example, if you move from one school to another. I want to get people recognizing those experiences and how to deal with them, observing and learning what to do and what not to do.

And when there’s a sense of frustration or discomfort, that’s often where the greatest learning can occur. For instance, in Asian cultures ‘Yes’ typically means simply ‘I hear you’. Many westerners mistakenly assume agreement and then think their Asian counterparts are dishonest or unreliable when they don’t deliver on something. I will say, “Let’s look at this...” and proceed to deconstruct incidents by explaining the concept of face-saving in Asia, and the relativity of values. Suddenly, there’s this “Ah” moment of heightened understanding.

There’s also the question of justifying the value of intercultural training. Companies see it as a soft skill, something nice to have, but not a real necessity. I think the more we can make the case with concrete examples and speak the language of business in terms of how an organization can profit from it, intercultural work can be made an integral part of any international company.

How do you think we can make SIETAR more relevant in these trying times of polarization, Brexit, Donald Trump?
I think it’s very important for us Sietarians to go beyond our own boundaries. There may be a tendency among interculturalists to speak the same language — a bit like an echo chamber, all encouraging each another without realizing it’s not necessarily what the real world thinks. We probably need to get up and make the case more by linking with others.
I think SIETAR can act as a bridge, helping people who feel disenfranchised. Here I'm referring not only to refugees and migrants but also those in dominant cultures who’ve been excluded from the mainstream. For example, many of those who voted for Brexit were in areas with high levels of poverty and unemployment; there wasn’t enough made of the positive impact of diversity, of aspects of belonging to a community, of being part of a larger union. We need to work with all the different parties, to go beyond our traditional boundaries. There is no easy solution and it can be particularly difficult, especially if you don’t have government resources.

We need to help change perspectives, so we see fellow human-beings with names rather than ‘foreigners’. That really struck me once when a little boy in Japan called me ‘gaijin’ (foreigner) and my neighbour’s son said, ‘That’s not a foreigner, that’s Jenkins san’! Also, where there’s a shared goal or purpose, regardless of ethnicity or race, people do find a way to do it. That is where business, without being aware of intercultural issues, actually does succeed. There’s a drive. We all have shared interests, let’s work out a way.

When I think of all the people we have across Europe, across the world, the possibilities with technology for exchanging ideas, information, experiences... We should be able to do more than we’re now doing. You hear of all these individual projects, making a difference at a small level. If we could somehow join up the dots, shine a light on what works and doesn’t work, compare notes and make improvements, get the economics right, everybody benefits. However, I am very optimistic. I teach intercultural coaching and development at the University of Warwick and the calibre of young people coming in to the intercultural profession is impressive. They are also ‘digital natives’, so I see great potential working together.

Our collective wisdom and experience is extremely valuable if we can find a way of building bridges. I started out from the refugee perspective and, over the years, moved on to business and organizational training and coaching. Now I’m more and more involved in education, grassroots and charity organizations. If professional interculturalists put in a little bit of time and expertise, we could make a big difference.

Joyce Jenkins — continued

Joyce Jenkins
A remarkable bridgebuilder in Asian-Western relations

Five Tips on How to Live and Work with the French

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an unexpected success

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Many people often tell me how surprised they are when they move to France and find the culture so… different. Expats can find themselves at a disadvantage trying to understand how to live and work with the French, and the quirks can multiply if you don’t speak the language. The French are not as complicated as you think, especially if someone helps you understand them!

As a bicultural coach in Paris who has lived as a French expat in the US, I’ve experienced firsthand how daunting life-changing situations can be and how important it is to understand the world you’re stepping into. Being born and raised in France, I found that I was somewhat “exotic” when I moved to the US. Relationships would tend to get lost in a flow of questions about where I came from and how and why I got there that it sometimes became difficult to fit in as one of the group.

As you try harder, the challenge is to keep from losing yourself! Your differences are assets and strengths once you understand the other culture and know how to communicate. It’s like finding the right frequency on a radio or the right pitch to sing a song with a band — that, I tell you as a musician. So communicating intelligently is key.

You can develop meaningful professional and personal relationships with the French; it’s all part of the challenging and exciting adventure of being an expat… and being yourself!

Here are a few tips on French culture and behavior to help you learn how to live and work more easily with the French.

1. Emotions
The French are not usually as emotional as one thinks, at least not openly. Our education via family and the school system is cartésienne, meaning rational and analytical, and rather strict. However, our heritage as a Latin country makes some of us a bit hot-headed and proud of our culture to the point of being intellectually intolerant. On some subjects, one can react with an emotional fit which, like a storm, will not last very long and will be quickly forgotten.

The French culture is knitted with interesting oppositions: clear and lucid reason with strong sensitivity, education, and sophistication with an irrational nature, open-mindedness with surges of pride. And all the nuances in between!

2. Action
Our education has programmed us to think using an analytical approach — whereas the Anglophones use a systemic approach — which is fairly rigid. It looks at every angle, thinks of all possible scenarios, and focuses on potential problems. French culture does not look kindly upon failure,
hence our decision-making is quite long, filled with pre-cautions and anxiety. For Anglophones, especially Americans using the “try and fail system”, where the experience of failure is positive, it looks completely counter-productive!

3. Love
The French are open when it comes to relationships. Few people get married, especially in a church, which is why they invented the PACS in 1999, providing the advantages of marriage without the commitment. People often have several relationships in a lifetime, separation and recomposed families are common. They usually maintain a good relationship with their exes. Culturally, you are entitled to a fulfilling, happy romantic life, and mediocrity in love is not an option.

Keeping in mind these cultural differences will help smooth the way at work as well as in life. As an example, I have worked with several expats in a large French bank and the most common problem is respecting a strong hierarchy while seeing little action after countless meetings where no decision seems to be made. Managers are still kind of “old school” and will not appreciate if you do not respect their decision (or non-decision!).

However, if you are persistent, yet diplomatic, and continue presenting your arguments and points of view without undermining their way of doing things, you’ll be appreciated for your fresh perspective. In addition, you’ll earn the trust of your boss who will then give you more freedom and delegate more responsibilities. The boss is often quite lonely and if you can persuade her/him that you are on their side, and not after their job, you will become powerful allies.

Isabelle Risacher is a trained professional coach, specialized in accompanying expats with their transition. More information about her activities at http://www.atelier-interactif.com
Training Films
Culture, Leadership and Teams
Short video clips for your classroom

compiled by Matthew Hill,
founder of The Intercultural Training Channel
culture99.wordpress.com

1. The BP Coffee Spill – Humorous Metaphor – UCB Comedy Channel Team
   Training Theme: Introducing a difficult topic into the training room.
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2AAa0gd7ClM

   Training Themes: Multi-focus orientation, assumptions about youth, change, active listening, testing authority
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EWrw5ogawS8

   Training Themes: Sexual harassment, trading favours, wielding power and gender assumptions, bias & prejudice.
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rS7PM9AUFjQ

   Training Theme: Diversity, inclusion, values in business
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7G0OUHnCudw

5. House of Cards (2014) — Frank Underwood Ruthlessness Kevin Spacey, Netflix
   Training Theme: Power, corruption, manipulation & ethics
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a5Ha3lWeXOo

   Training Theme: Age discrimination & diversity.
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t6p2exVZttE

   Training Theme: Social status, educational prejudice and the consequences of assumptions.
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aZMg4vFcrRQs

8. – The Clues in the Story TED (2014) — Andrew Stanton (Writer of Toy Story)
   Training Theme: Reputation, story telling & humour.
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KxDwieKpawg

   Training Themes: Assumptions about scholarship students and social status, white privilege, rules, power & race.
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xSnraJOeOyM

    Training Themes: Responsibility, consequences, reputation, coaching, leadership, accountability, sacrifice, personal choice, motivation, power & salvation.
    https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m_iKg7nutNY
In 2014, academic researchers Amy Chua and Jed Rubenfeld published a passionate, controversial work entitled *The Triple Package*. In it, they postulated that some cultural and ethnic groups in the U.S. — Jews, Mormons, Chinese immigrants in general — strongly outperformed others in terms of income, education and professional attainment.

They began their investigation with a simple question: why do some social groups achieve more the rest? Drawing on new research and unfamiliar statistics, the husband and wife team found that three cultural traits were most likely to push one toward upward mobility — an inherent superiority complex, feelings of insecurity and a strong need to control impulses.

Predictably, *The Triple Package* provoked scores of emotional reactions, including accusations that the work was based on notions of racial superiority, strains of colonialism, imperialism, even fascism. Obviously, the book went against the great American consensus about everyone being equal to everyone else. All that aside, the book offers original perspectives on how certain types of subgroups function in society.

So, how did the researchers go about defining the traits of success? The first condition, having a superiority complex, was explained as a deep, almost disturbing belief in being exceptional.

It can be based on religion, as with Mormons and Jews who feel “chosen” in a “sign of divine favor”. With Chinese and Persians, an overriding belief in cultural history is at play. It can also be based on social distinctions, as with the “priestly” caste of Brahmans in India and the entrepreneurial Igbos of Nigeria. Finally — like Donald Trump, who says his parents gave him exceptional genes — some believe in their superior heritage.

As for the second trait, the authors point to inherent anxiety about one’s place in society, one’s worth, and the fear of underachieving. We all have feelings of insecurity but certain groups are more predisposed to it than others, such as the immigrant, who suffer economic and social anxiety. Or children whose parents constantly tell them they’re not doing well enough in school, that they can do better...

Paradoxically, these two traits must be combined for the success dynamic to kick in. Normally, a lack of self-esteem coupled with feelings of superiority would land you in psychotherapy, yet it’s precisely this unstable coalition that generates the drive to show the world what you’re worth.
The Triple Package...
— continued

Germany’s exceptional success in exports may be due to triple-package factors.

The final element is impulse control: persevering, resisting temptation, the opposite of instant gratification. Studies have demonstrated that willpower and resolve are better predictors of success than high IQ or SAT (scholastic aptitude test) scores on standardized tests. As Sigmund Freud noted, a great civilization may begin with the suppression of primal instincts.

The traits are obviously not limited to specific ethnic or social groups but are found in all types of people. Steve Jobs and Barack Obama shared an overblown belief in their intelligence, a sense they were on a mission to revolutionize the world. Both shared a chip on the shoulder: Jobs was adopted and Obama grew up without a father in addition to being mixed-race. Both set out to prove to themselves, validating their worth through self-control and meticulous attention to details.

On a higher level, one can apply this to nations. Take Germany. The country has a historical sense of knowing better (Besserwisser) — a feeling of superiority — but simultaneously its citizens share an innate anxiety due to its unfavourable geographic position (das Land der Mitte), something historians have continually pointed out.

The country has known more than its part of human suffering caused by Europe’s many conflicts, beginning with the Thirty Year War and followed by many other military confrontations. And the last war brought collective disaster, culminating in the Holocaust, which brought disgrace and shame upon the German people as a whole.

The consequences of mass destruction and death have played a large role in the German Angst toward uncertainty and the need for order. To counteract their feelings of self-doubt, Germans have worked hard and pushed discipline and perfectionism to extremes. The result is a nation that has the highest export rate per capita in the world today.

Chua and Rubenfeld’s message is clear, being raised in a triple-package culture doesn’t guarantee success but it does quietly increase the odds.

And it explains why a Chinese immigrant and an American Jew did this study — they wanted to understand how they, themselves, wound up as professors at two of America’s greatest universities, Yale and Harvard.

Chua and Rubenfeld explain their research and findings in a lively TED talk, which can be seen here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uHUMcxqm9U
Who are you?
... Stories about identity

by Dan MacLeod

Waiting

...for the phone to ring...

But it goes back farther than that. Back to Boston and being ten years old and thinking baseball players lined up to sign autographs for kids after the game, I’d brought a baseball and a pen to Fenway Park. And a glove, in case of foul balls.

Goes back to believing in magic, true belief, through to my bones and the flesh upon them. And now it’s decades later and the kid with the ball and pen is waiting for the phone to ring.

I’ve been waiting for the phone to ring for eighteen months now. Not the same call, a succession of calls, but the same silent phone. The sound of dust accumulating, and dust accumulates like snow on my desk.

Eighteen months ago I thought I could send a book to Matt Damon, we grew up about a mile apart. The book is my first novel and it’s written like a movie, would make a great movie. It’s about being a kid in Boston, then it jumps twenty years to being about a reporter crossing Europe, then America. I figured Matt might want to buy the rights, figured I could call his agent, explain about leaving home at 18 to play hockey in Canada and winding up working in French radio. I had a good line ready too.

“What his mother took him to go shopping for first grade, I was in high school and worked at the German sausage place in Harvard Square. They probably went there for lunch.”

I called California but did not talk to his agent, I talked to an assistant who didn’t want to talk to me, he said they only took pitches from agents. He sounded like some kid just out of college, was nice enough to offer some advice.

“Use your Boston connection.” I said that’s what I was doing and he said, “No, I mean find someone you know in Boston who knows Mr. Damon...Look, I shouldn’t even be talking to you, I have to hang up now. Good luck.”

So I needed an agent to talk to an agent. An agent, like in chemistry. What took one catalyst now takes two; the connection is at a second remove. The reaction does not take place, linkage shuttled to another level. Society is biological chemistry and the physics of structures.

No book to Matt Damon and none to Bruce Springsteen either and he’s in the book, I met him in Paris. He’s one of the people it’s dedicated to, that’s why I wanted to send it.

I called his agent and talked to the receptionist who talked

Snow was general all over Ireland.
It was falling on every part of the dark central plain, on the treeless hills...

Stories about identity
Waiting

Waiting by Dan MacLeod

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to somebody who told her to tell me to e-mail the chapter Springsteen's in. Then I got an e-mail telling me Mr. Springsteen didn't accept "unsolicited gifts".

Who solicits gifts?

I did send books to Paul Theroux and Roddy Doyle, it turns out you can send stuff to writers. Sent books and letters, fairly long ones, about the influence of their work on mine, and I asked Doyle if he heard any Joyce in my writing and told Theroux I grew up just down the street but neither bothered to answer. And I sent a letter and book to Matt Taibbi at "Rolling Stone", he's from just south of Boston, but he didn't answer either.

Spent months tracking down my ninth-grade English teacher, he was the first person to teach me about writing. He called as soon as he got my message and, forty-two years later, we talked for over an hour. I mentioned not having an agent and he said an agent was no big deal, he knew one. But he didn't, he just knew someone who did and the guy didn't want to share. This took five months. I said forget about agents, just call when you get to the end but he never did, he was embarrassed so he stopped reading.

Sent the book to one of my favorite editors back when I was a journalist. She's a poet from New York and, fifteen years later, she scream-mailed "You wrote a book!!!" And when she got two-thirds of the way through she wrote "I want to read as fast as I can and I want it to go on forever!" Except she doesn't know any agents, just a lot of New York writers without one.

See the thing you’re supposed to do is find a publisher. Not a real publisher, they don’t accept writers’ submissions, they just try to sell you their books on self-publishing, which is logical but which I find disgusting and insulting and depressing.

No, you find an independent publisher who does your kind of stuff and you send a few bits only, not the whole book, and if you’re lucky they print a few hundred copies to sell in independent bookstores.

But my book is 656 pages long. And there’s a second book, already written, just as long. This work is ten years of my life, I make jokes about Nikolai Gogol and “Dead Souls”.

All I want is a foot in the door, all I want is a chance.
So...to the call for which I’m waiting.

From a guy whose family came over on the Mayflower and they’ve all been going to Harvard since it opened. He was a boss at the Boston “Globe”, published my first piece when I was 20, mentored me after that, hired me at a magazine nearly twenty years later. Which folded eighteen years ago and we hadn’t talked since but we talked for forty minutes when I called.

He told me about how he had two girlfriends these days and was working on a book on climate change. I told him about my ex-fiancée, how she seemed like she might come back sometimes, how she was doing a Master’s in biology up near the Gaspé. He said we should come down, we’d go to his family’s island off Cape Cod, it was a bird sanctuary.

He said he’d read the book but had a poet-friend of his read it instead. He wrote to say the guy liked it, as if that was something. I said just read the last part, about West Virginia and Alabama and the Texas-Mexico border, it was all the same as today, all the same problems, I could probably sell excerpts to a magazine. He’s the kind of guy who not only knows editors, he knows publishers too, he was one.

So he said he’d get back to me but that was a few weeks ago and I’m still waiting for the phone to ring but less and less convinced it will. And the main thing isn’t even that, it’s that all that was Plan B.

*Plan A* is the girl. She was talking about us living together in Munich next fall, she’s working with a professor there. We talked about going to see Sissi’s palace in Innsbruck. But she’s not calling back either, not for eighty-one days now, eighty-two...

The sound of dust accumulating, and dust accumulates like snow on my desk and I smoke endless cigarettes, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.

*Snow was general all over Ireland. It was falling on every part of the dark central plain, on the treeless hills...falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead.*

(James Joyce, 1914)
Last April, SIETAR Deutschland held a forum for its members in Bonn. Unlike classical conferences, with presentations announced in advance, there was no set program; instead, organizers had chosen to go "bar camp".

Described on the website as a flexible, adaptable format—each participant is a creator and expected to engage — it felt odd at first. When you looked up what each session was about, there was a blank space. Imagine the surprise, shock even, among risk-averse Germans.

Anxiety among participants the evening before was high, expectations were that it would be chaotic, a fiasco.

It turned out to be a spirited, interactive hit.

People eagerly volunteered and the topics were many and diverse: Can intercultural trainings be standardized?; Change in China; Challenges for interculturalists; Integration yes, but not in my backyard; Unconscious Bias Training - cosmetic or door opener; Social-cultural sensitivity in meta milieus.

The sessions were passionate, engaging. And, at the end of two days, the participants expressed their feelings in an on-line evaluation and termed the experiment a runaway success. The organizers were awarded with major applause for their willingness to try the new format and to continue in this structure at the next forum.

So, what exactly is a “bar camp”? Unlike a traditional conference, a bar camp is self-organizing, and relies on the passion and responsibility of the participants. It’s essentially an unconference, where “there’s no agenda until… the attendees make one up.”

The first bar camp, in Silicon Valley in 2005, was organized in the space of one week, from conception to event, by computer programmers who wanted the free flow of ideas as a way for the 200 attendees to find people with similar interests. “Bar” refers to source coding in the computer world.

The structure is simple — attendees schedule sessions by writing a card and putting it on a grid. People can talk about whatever interests them.

Everyone is encouraged to present or facilitate a session, a deliberate change from "off-the-record by default" and "no recording" rules at many conferences. And a face-to-face event morphs into a hybrid one with remote online engagement.

Thirteen years later and 9000 kilometers away, bar camps are a hit in Deutschland!
Primarily aimed at undergraduate education, Human Encounters provides a simple, comprehensible, and useful introduction to knowledge and know-how to those curious about the dynamics of communication. Although this is the translation and revised edition of a Norwegian original, the English is easy-to-read and often elegant in its simplicity.

While Dahl presents extensive traditional intercultural and communication theory for the sake of educational completeness, the importance of this book is that it moves the discussion through these bases onto more contemporary theoretical grounding and synthesizes practical insights about the field. We are led from a static to a dynamic view of culture “as a verb”. For example, the multiple cultural roles that each person plays in life and work, the context in which these are acted out takes more sophisticated interpretation than the facile cultural labels, often stereotypical, that were stuck on them in the past.

One might say Human Encounters is an encyclopedic overview of the many forms, functions, techniques and challenges of language and the communication process, its psychology, philosophy, epistemology, logic hermeneutics and ethics. The understanding of culture here is not an isolated study topic. Rather the book draws from many diverse disciplines and toolsets and then examines each topic with relevant cultural considerations. Culture and communication are seen as creative processes, often requiring a negotiation process to understand, collaborate and shape new interpersonal realities, as well as one’s evolving identity.

The book is replete with short illustrative incidents of cultural clashes, misunderstandings and the reasons for them, occasionally illustrated with cartoons and models. The reader is treated to numerous examples involving the Norwegian experience, and references to Norwegian perspectives and scholarship, relatively rare in English language intercultural texts. There is also high proportion of sub-Saharan African examples, sometimes reflecting missionary and educational encounters as well as business situations.

In particular, Human Encounters pays attention to the performative aspects that make for effective communication, as well as pointing to the often-unrecognized role of the various forms of power exercised in and influencing the communication process. These remain alive both in the intentions of those who are trying to influence each other, as well as in the socially constructed environment in which the communication is taking place.

The book seems more of a reader and a discussion starter than a textbook, so those who would use it in their courses will need to create an interactive, learning classroom where its materials can be discussed and experimented with in situ.

Reviewed by George Simons
Yesterday evening I sat down with my work team, three generations of “aliens” from four different countries, two women and two men (myself one of them) to view and discuss this performance. All of us had experienced cultural relocation if not dislocation. One does not have to leave one’s land of birth to experience these, but, given today’s increased mobility, moving abroad is the contemporary circumstance in which cultural dissonance may frequently be experienced.

Once again, we experienced the power of storytelling for creating awareness, healing through sharing, and revealing what still needs first aid.

Usually being a Third Culture Kid (TCK) results from geographical relocation in childhood. In many cases, such as Liang’s, the hybridity resulting from one’s parent’s diverse origins and their cultural baggage may add to the definition. However, some uses of the term TCK have become problematical, given that the term too often implies a kind of statute of limitation on one’s past.

Many users identify with a third culture of mobility because they come from several cultural backgrounds and believe or wish to believe that these have been simply outgrown and can be trashed. In such cases, the term TCK seems to invite denial of one’s multiple cultural resources in favor of a new more desirable identity—a culture (if the word be spoken) unto oneself, freedom from one’s past, achieved through a sort of adolescent rebellion.

Such neo-cosmopolitan self-labeling by denial can manifest itself more acutely the higher the price the individual has paid for one or more of the identities she or he holds. Frequently any attempts to identify TCKs, their style and behavior, as reflecting a cultural source or resource is rejected as stereotyping and can be fiercely resented.

When dealing with such folk and when coaching others about dealing with them, my advice in sum is, “Listen to their story and look for the pain.”

The pain is largely what the greater part of Elizabeth Liang’s performance is about. Multiple moves in her young life are dramatically reflected in the hurt and loneliness of non-acceptance, labeling, schoolmate mockery, misidentification, and exclusion despite her longing for belonging.

Her storytelling is not without a frequent touch of humor—she stokes laughter of recognition from the innards of her audience. In other words, she offers something that others can somehow relate to in their own stories.
Alien Citizen...  
— continued

ary behavior. This can snare one in the trap of playing the whining victim role and blaming others for helplessness felt in the absence of one’s perceived entitlements.

Liang explores her story with force of fact and confession of impact but does not whine or blame. Rather her performance is powered by an empathetic ownership for her past that connects her with her audience.

Liang’s story is not that of an impoverished migrant or of a disenfranchised minority person, but of a child in a family following the path of the multiple business-based expatriations in her father’s career.

She was not trapped in a ghetto. Hers seems to have been a comfortable if not well-to-do existence for the most part, benefitting from strong family inclusion as well as educational opportunity.

Gender, generation, and class status were touched on in the performance narrative, but our review team suggested that these were probably not insignificant undercurrents of other experiences that emerged in the storyline.

It is only in the final moments of the performance, that Liang explicitly knits her story of pain and misunderstanding into the fabric of her current confidence and professional success. Accepting our stories may take time, years, in fact, raising the question of how we may aid and support each other along the path. As we mature, what we have experienced becomes part of the staunch fiber that can, woven into the telling, empower and embolden those who share similar challenges to embracing their identities.

In addition to Liang’s performance, the DVD also contains a couple of outtakes as well as an interview that sheds more light on her motivation and route to creating and promoting this performance. She serves a good model for the advice I frequently offer my mentees when they seem lost at sea, not knowing where to solidly place their next career steps: “Go with what brung ya!”

There are resources in one’s past, in one’s pains, in one’s human connections, in one’s stories, parts of the recording that makes us who we are, that are anything but same-old, same-old, when revisited and tapped for their hidden sustenance.

Reviewed by George Simons
This three-day event will have as its theme

**INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE: A KEY FOR INCLUSIVE ORGANIZATIONS**

This congress welcomes all those who are interested in exploring intercultural competence as a source of innovation, with the aim of making a multidisciplinary approach to diversity management, an essential mechanism for achieving organizational goals in today’s globalized world.

Málaga has been chosen as the location for the congress due to its colourful and diverse ethnicity — blessed with sunshine, loaded with history, filled with a thriving multicultural atmosphere and brimming with a youthful vigour that proudly acknowledges its multi-layered past and a history spanning about 2,800 years. Today’s Malaga is a vibrant, modern and cosmopolitan city, and the centre of an important communications hub, so getting there is easy, whatever means of transport you want to use.

More information at:
https://www.sietar.es/congreso/

More information on Málaga at:
Events, workshops, congresses

SIETAR Europa Webinars
June 8th 2018, Friday, at 18.00 – 19.00 pm (CET)
Speaker: Michael Boyle
Topic: “Companies are striving to be flexible and are surprised when they run across difficulties. Maybe the problem is culture?”

July 9th 2018, Thursday at 15.00 – 16.00 pm (CET)
Speaker: Fath E Mubeen
Topic: “Religious persecution is on the rise: the substantive freedom is under global siege”

Bath, United Kingdom
11-15 June 2018
Developing intercultural training skills This 5-day course is for trainers wishing to learn more about theory and practice of intercultural training, both to integrate intercultural topics into their current training and also to deliver their own intercultural training courses.

18-22 June 2018
Designing and delivering intercultural training This is a follow-up to the above course with the added feature of exchanging ideas with trainers from different countries. Suitable for trainers who already have experience in the field. Information at: www.lts-training.com or contact adrian.pilbeam@lts-training.com

Mondorf, Luxembourg
20-22 June, 2018
Cultural Orientations Framework (COF) assessment certification trainings. Facilitated by Prof. Philippe Rosinski, participants will become equipped to leverage cultural differences of all kinds to promote creativity, inclusion and sustainable high-performance with individuals, teams and organisations. For more information, click to www.GlobalCoaching.pro

Online Everyday
The SIETAR Europa group, discussing
Research into how language and culture affect how multinational teams work
on LinkedIn, has now over 8000 members. Plus it offers videos, articles, books, tools for the intercultural profession. To join, click here: https://www.linkedin.com/groups/2740568

For more information, contact George Simons at diversophy@gmail.com

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