Objectives

1. Understand 8 cultural dimensions that impact cross-cultural working relationships

2. Identify your own tendencies related to each of these dimensions, as well as the tendencies of those on your team(s)

3. Identify shifts in your style to accommodate others' expectations, as well as shifts in your expectations to accommodate others' styles

To get started

- Meet your neighbor

- Share an experience of misunderstanding between yourself and someone from another culture

Overview: 8 Cultural Distinctions

Communicating	• Low Context	High Context
Persuading	• Principles First	Applications First
Trusting	• Task-based	Relationship-based
Evaluating	• Direct (-) feedback	Indirect (-) feedback
Disagreeing	• Confrontational	Avoidant
Deciding	• Consensual	Top-down
Leading	• Egalitarian	Hierarchical
Scheduling	• Linear time	Flexible Time

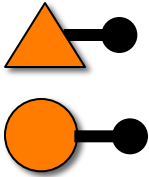Source: Erin Meyer, *The Culture Map*

Using The Culture Map

1. Identify one person of another culture with whom you work

2. As we talk through each cultural distinction, mark:

△   The midpoint of your culture

●—△   Your own tendency

○   The midpoint of the "Other" person's culture

●—○   Your perception of their own tendency

The Culture Map
Source: Erin Meyer

Communicating
- Low Context   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   High Context

Persuading
- Applications First   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Principles First

Trusting
- Task-based   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Relationship-based

Evaluating
- Direct (-) feedback   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Indirect (-) feedback

Disagreeing
- Confrontational   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Avoidant

Deciding
- Consensual   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Top-down

Leading
- Egalitarian   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Hierarchical

Scheduling
- Linear time   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Flexible Time

Communicating

US	Netherlands	Finland			Spain	Italy	Singapore	Iran	China	Japan
Australia	Germany	Denmark	Poland	Brazil	Mexico		France	India	Kenya	Korea
Canada		UK			Argentina		Russia	Saudi Arabia	Indonesia

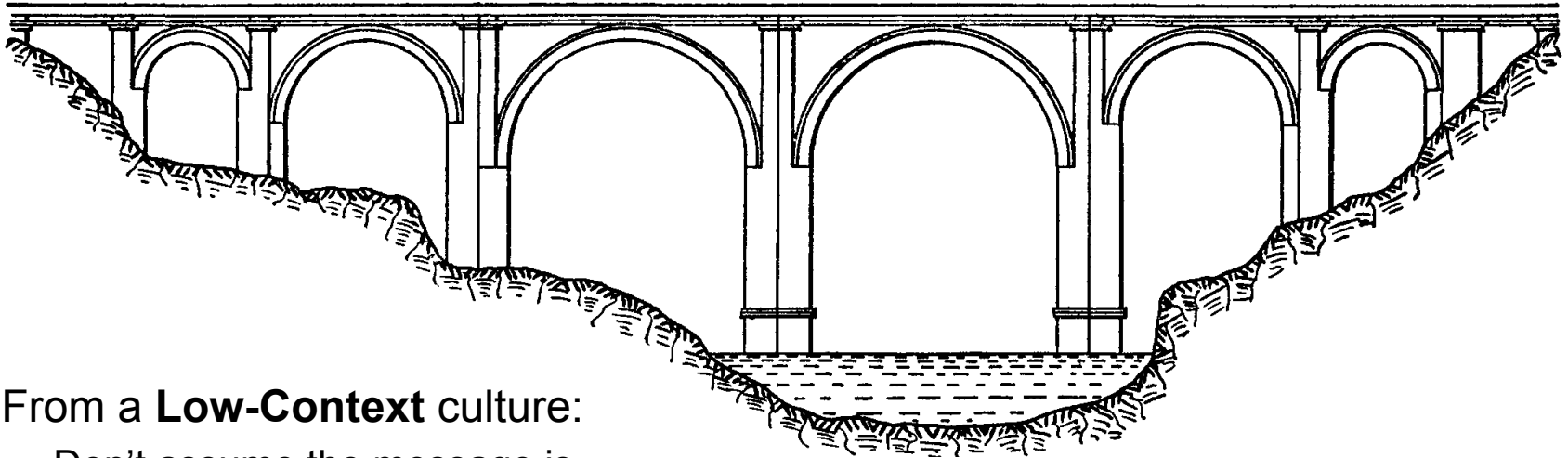**Low-Context** ←————————————————————————→ **High-Context**

Low-Context — Good communication is precise, simple, and clear. Messages are expressed and understood at face falue. Repetition is appreciated if it helps clarify the communication.
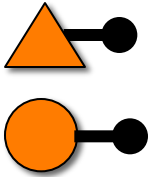
High-Context — Good communication is sophisticated, nuanced, and layered. Messages are both spoken and read between the lines. Messages are often implied but not plainly expressed.

Source: Erin Meyer, *The Culture Map*
Figure 1.1

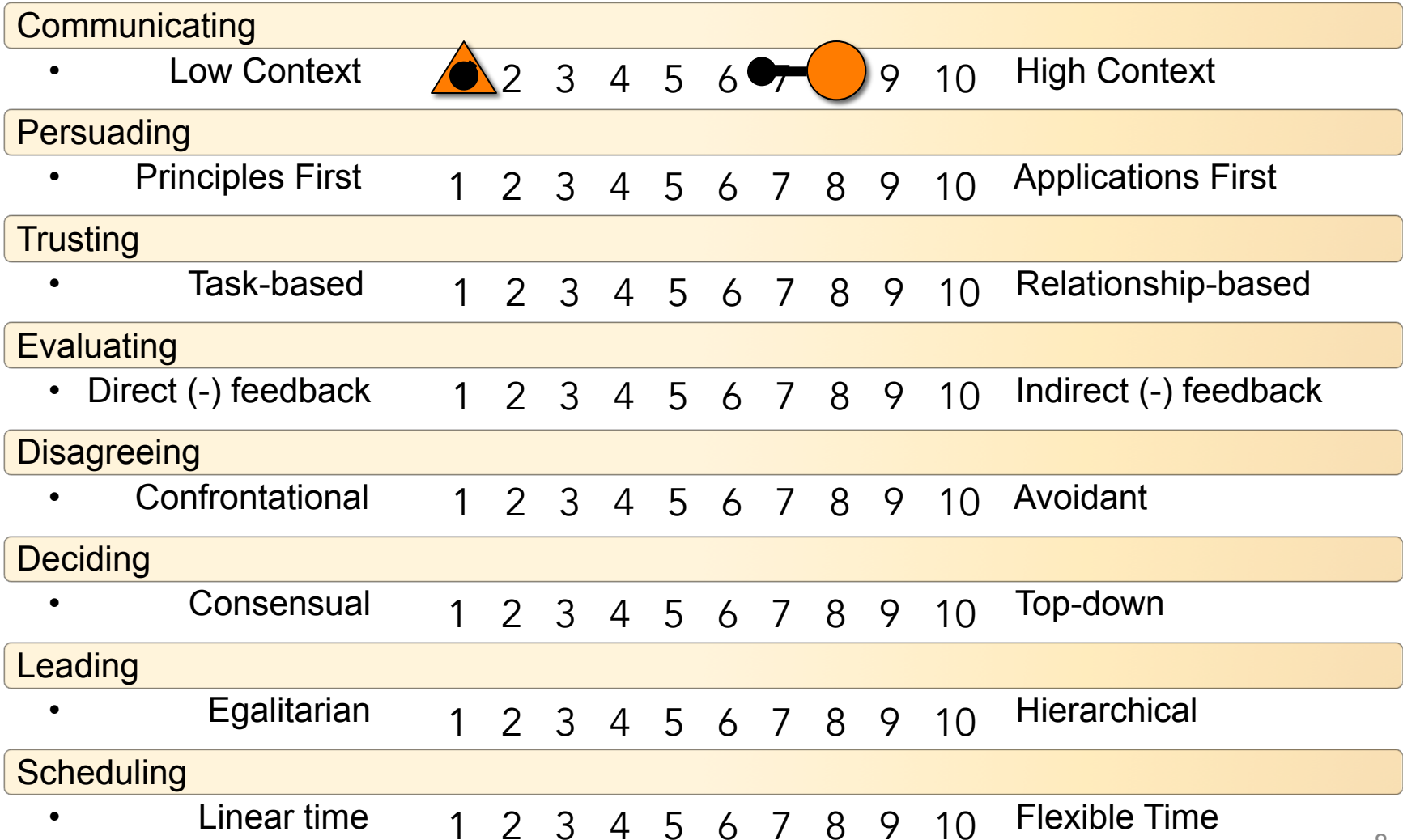# *Bridging the Gap: Communicating*

- From a **Low-Context** culture:
  - Don't assume the message is contained in spoken words
  - Pay as much attention to what is not said as to what is said

- From a **High-Context** culture:
  - Don't assume the message extends beyond spoken words
  - Be especially careful when working with other high-context cultures…contextual cues differ across cultures

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The Culture Map
Source: Erin Meyer

Communicating
- Low Context   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   High Context

Persuading
- Principles First   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Applications First

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- Egalitarian   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Hierarchical

Scheduling
- Linear time   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Flexible Time

Persuading

| Italy | Russia | Germany | Argentina | Sweden | Netherlands | Australia | |
| France | Spain | | Brazil | Mexico | Denmark | UK | Canada | US |

Principles-first ← → **Applications-first**

Applications-first Individuals are trained to begin with a fact, statement, or opinion and later add concepts to back up or explain the conclusion as necessary. The preference is to begin a message or report with an executive summary or bullet points. Discussions are approached in a practical, concrete manner. Theoretical or philosophical discussions are avoided in a business environment.

Principles-first Individuals have been trained to first develop the theory or complex concept before presenting a fact, statement, or opinion. The preference is to begin a message or report by building up a theoretical argument before moving on to a conclusion. The conceptual principles underlying each situation are valued.

Source: Erin Meyer, *The Culture Map*
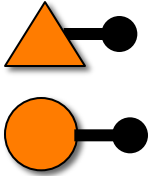Figure

Bridging the Gap: Persuading
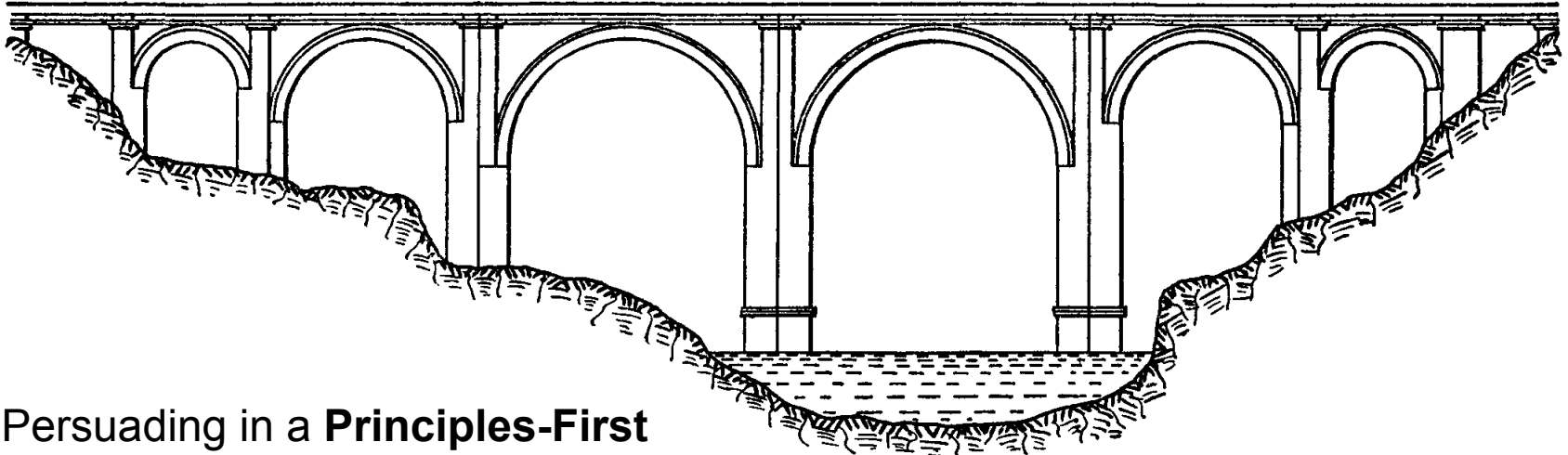
- Persuading in a **Principles-First** culture:
  - Do your homework; the fact that something is a 'best practice' for a handful of organizations will not be a convincing case
  - Explain underlying principles first
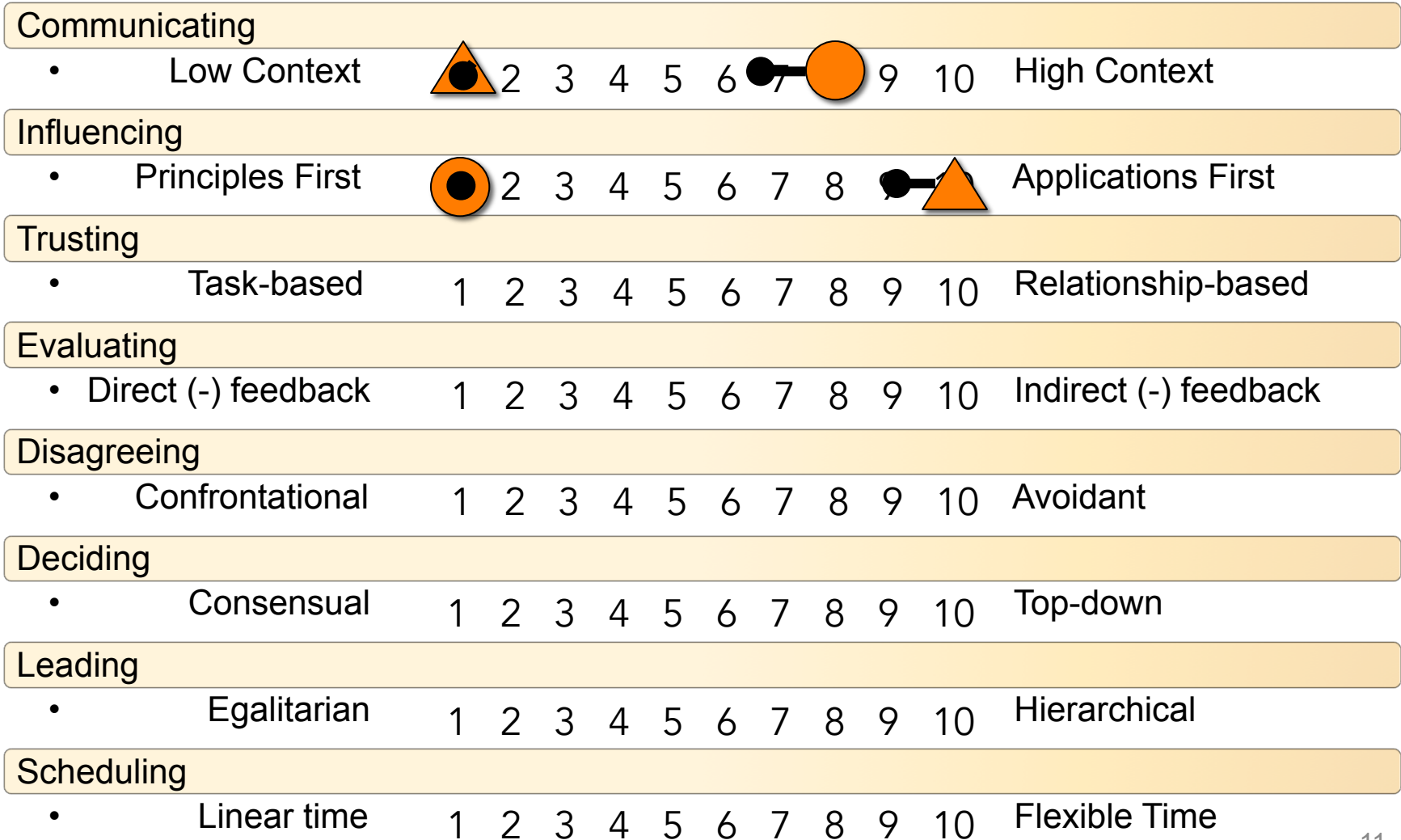
- Persuading in an **Applications-First** culture:
  - Reflect on and identify, *"For the purpose of what?"* am I sharing this concept?
  - Provide an application or case study at the start

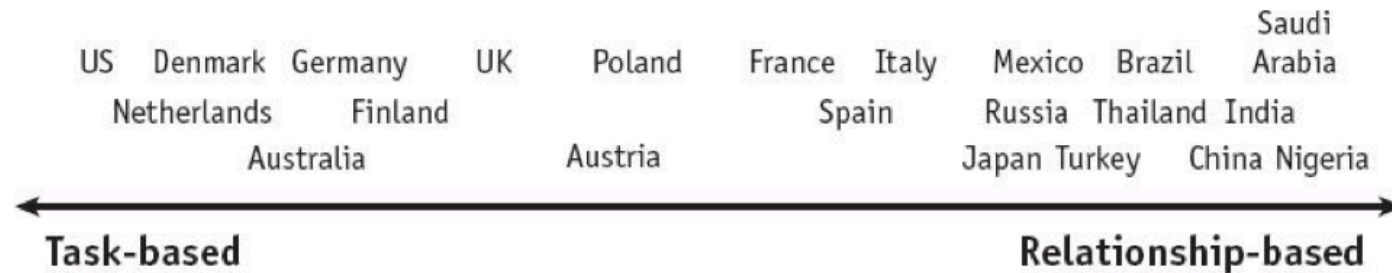Source: Erin Meyer, *The Culture Map* Figure 3.1

The Culture Map
Source: Erin Meyer

Communicating
- Low Context   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   High Context

Influencing
- Principles First   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Applications First

Trusting
- Task-based   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Relationship-based

Evaluating
- Direct (-) feedback   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Indirect (-) feedback

Disagreeing
- Confrontational   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Avoidant

Deciding
- Consensual   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Top-down

Leading
- Egalitarian   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Hierarchical

Scheduling
- Linear time   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Flexible Time

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Trusting

Source: Erin Meyer, *The Culture Map*
Figure 6.1

Bridging the Gap: Trusting
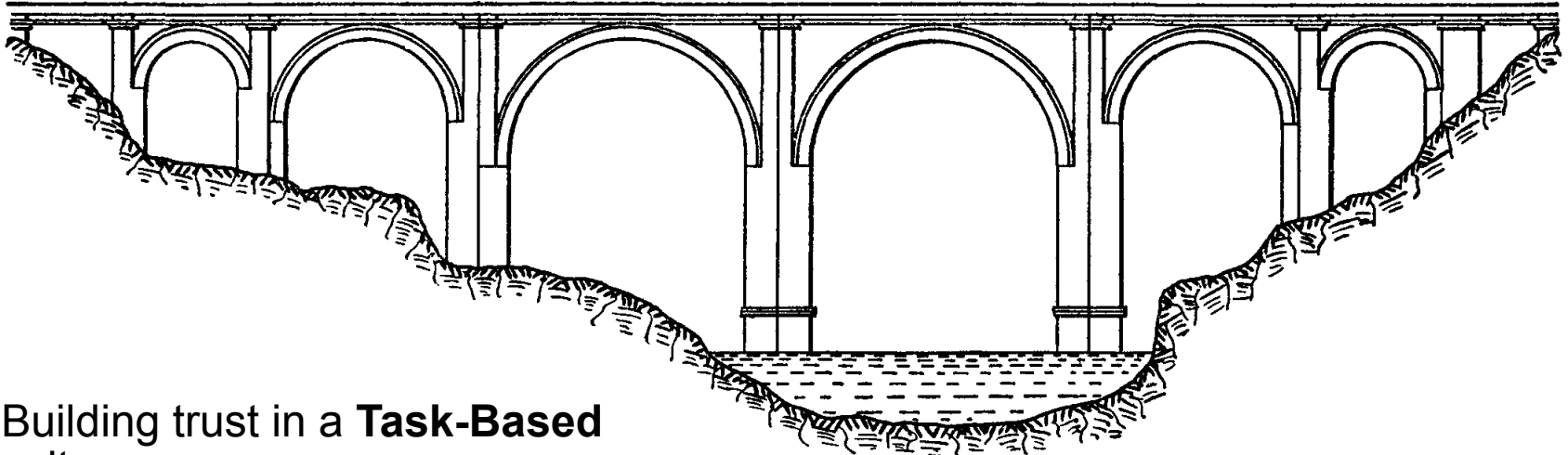
- Building trust in a **Task-Based** culture:
    - Follow through on commitments
    - Report out on your accomplishments
    - Don't assume a friendly conversation is indicative of a deep relationship
    - Don't discount the importance of relationships…they are will critical

- Building trust in a **Relationship-Based** culture:
    - Show up as your true, integrated self
    - Don't "get down to business" until a caring connection is established
    - Offer explanations when asking for details
    - Don't assume a "hard shell" doesn't have a soft center
    - Build on common interests

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The Culture Map
Source: Erin Meyer

Communicating										
• Low Context	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	High Context

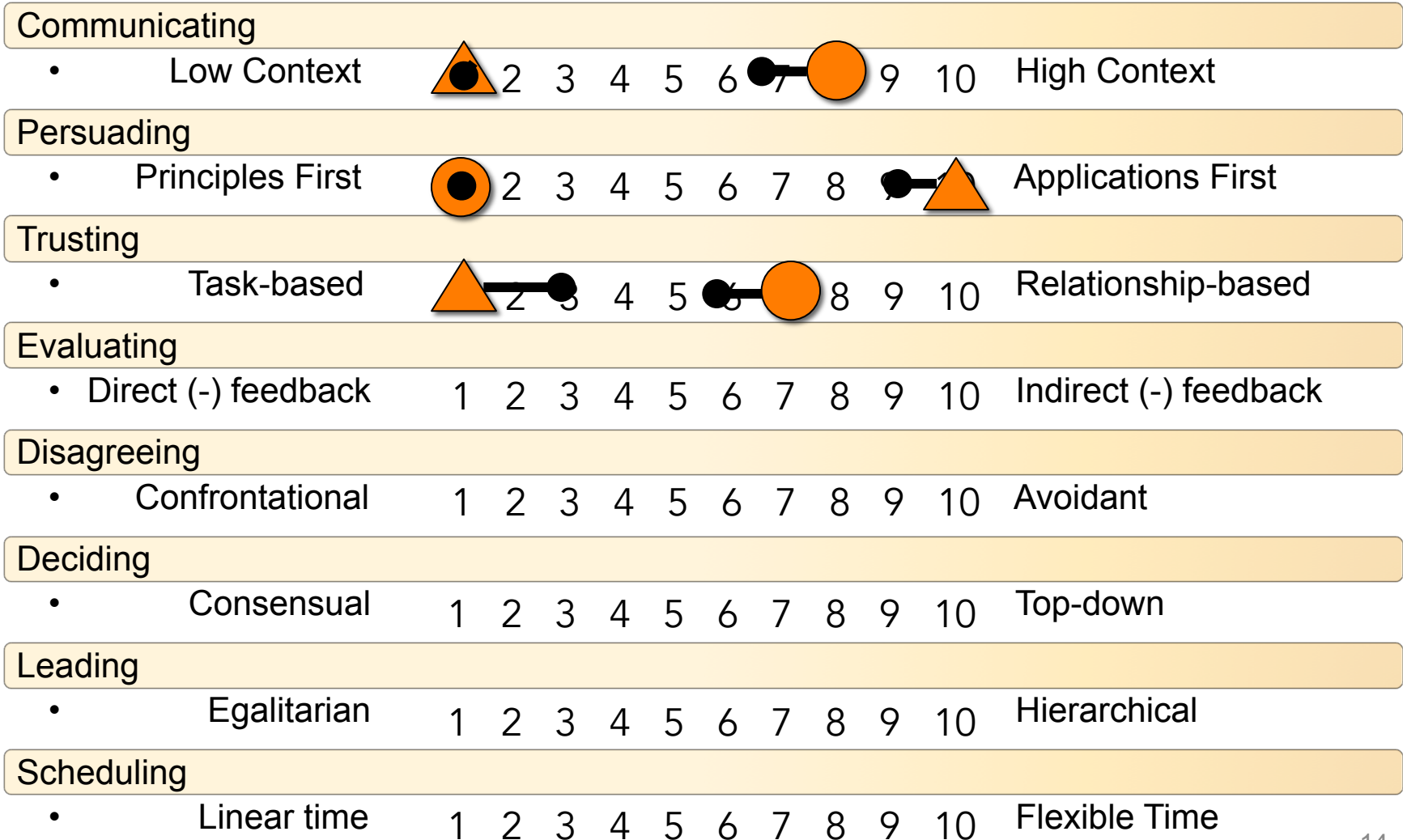| Persuading										
• Principles First	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Applications First

Trusting										
• Task-based	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Relationship-based

Evaluating										
• Direct (-) feedback	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Indirect (-) feedback

Disagreeing										
• Confrontational	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Avoidant

Deciding										
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Leading										
• Egalitarian	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Hierarchical

Scheduling										
• Linear time	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Flexible Time

Evaluating

Russia   France   Italy   US   UK Brazil   India Saudi Arabia Japan

Israel Germany Norway Australia   Canada   Mexico   China Korea   Thailand

Netherlands Denmark Spain   Argentina   Kenya Ghana Indonesia

⟵————————————————————————————⟶

Direct negative feedback   **Indirect negative feedback**

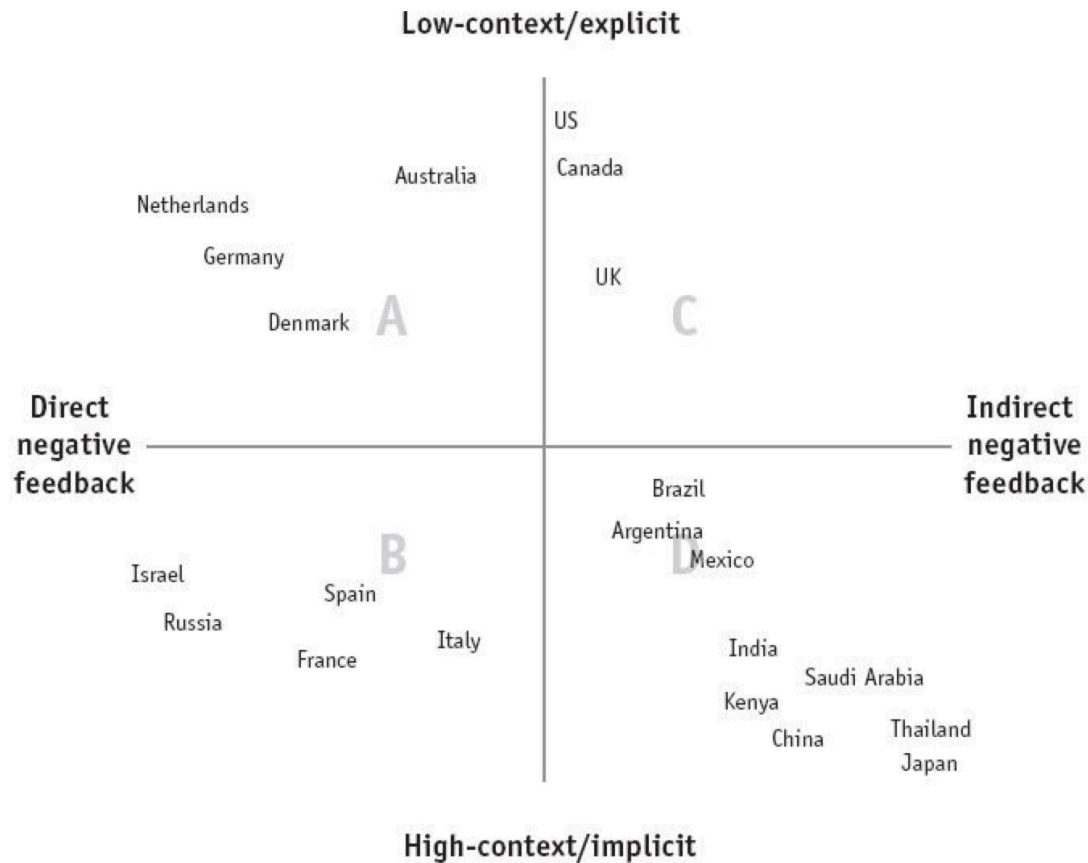|	
Direct negative feedback	Negative feedback to a colleague is provided frankly, bluntly, honestly. Negative messages stand alone, not softened by positive ones. Absolute descriptors are often used (totally inappropriate, completely unprofessional) when criticizing. Criticism may be given to an individual in front of a group.
Indirect negative feedback	Negative feedback to a colleague is provided softly, subtly, diplomatically. Positive messages are used to wrap negative ones. Qualifying descriptors are often used (sort of inappropriate, slightly unprofessional) when criticizing. Criticism is given only in private.

Source: Erin Meyer, *The Culture Map*
Figure 2.2

Context – Feedback Intersection

Source: Erin Meyer, *The Culture Map*
Figure 2.3

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Bridging the Gap: Evaluating

In a **Direct, Low Context Culture:**

- Drop the downgraders
- Don't try to mimic the direct negative feedback unless you're also from a direct negative culture
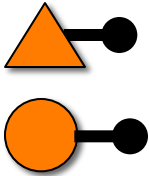
In a **Direct, High Context Culture:**

- Drop the downgraders…maybe use a few upgraders
- Don't take criticism personally
- Recognize that this approach makes positive feedback more meaningful

- In an **Indirect, Low Context** culture:
  - Start with the positive feedback
  - Balance positive and negative feedback
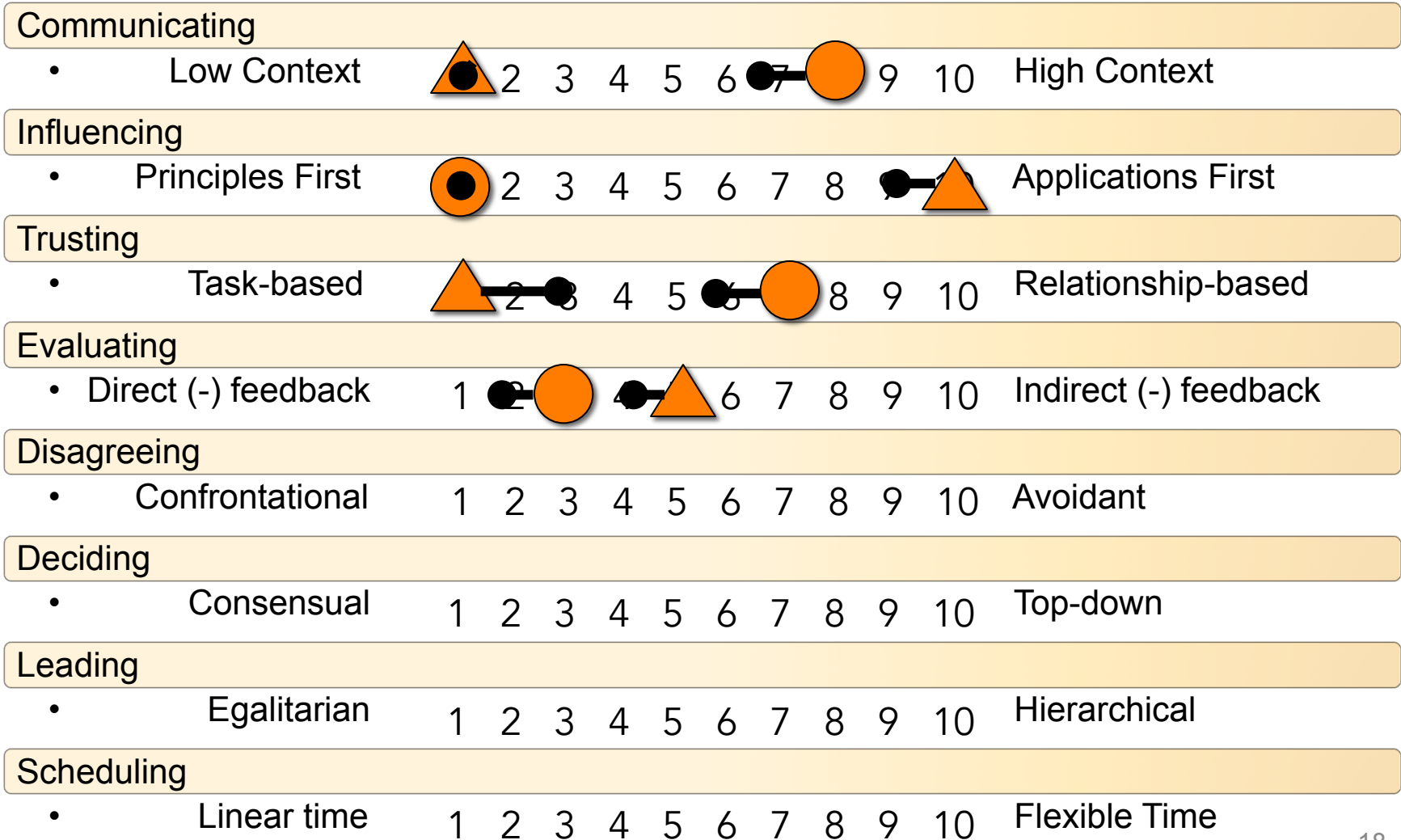 - Use "downgraders" (e.g., a little, kind of, somewhat)

- In an **Indirect, High Context** culture:
  - Never give feedback in public
  - Give negative feedback over time
  - Share positive feedback only, with out mentioning anything about areas for improvement
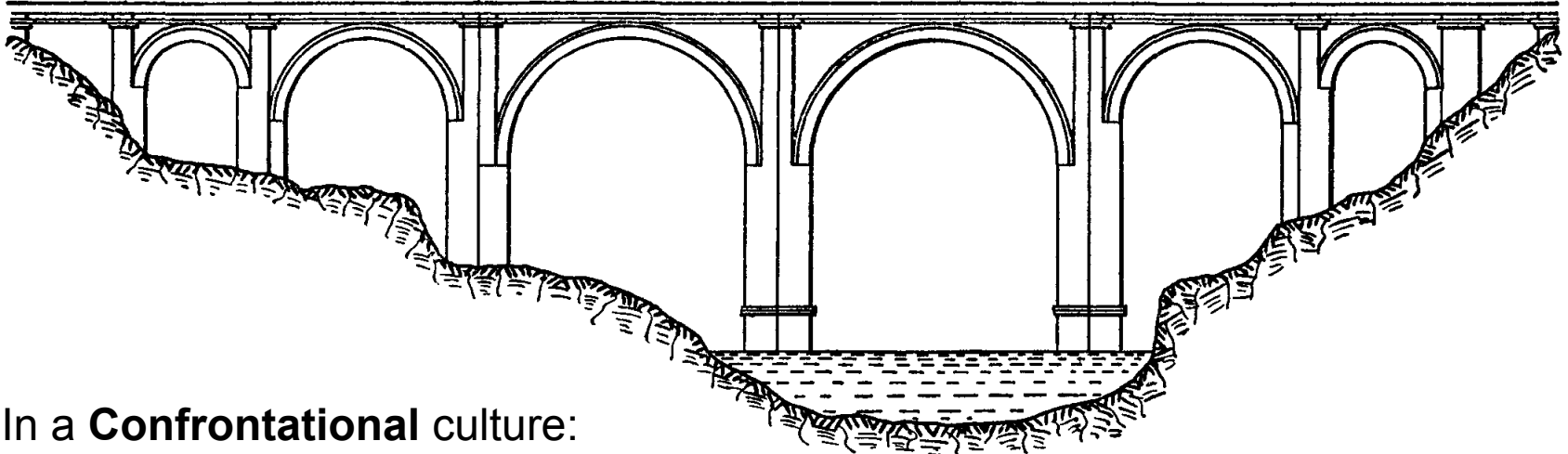
The Culture Map
Source: Erin Meyer

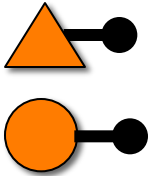**Communicating**
- Low Context   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   High Context

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- Consensual   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Top-down

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Scheduling
- Linear time   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Flexible Time

18

Disagreeing

Israel   Germany   Denmark   Australia   US   Sweden   India   China   Indonesia
   France   Russia   Spain   Italy   UK   Brazil   Mexico   Peru   Ghana   Japan
          Netherlands   Singapore   Saudi Arabia   Thailand

←——→

Confrontational   **Avoids confrontation**

....

Confrontational   Disagreement and debate are positive for the team or organization.
                            Open confrontation is appropriate and will not negatively impact
                            the relationship.

Avoids confrontation   Disagreement and debate are negative for the team or organization.
                            Open confrontation is inappropriate and will break group harmony
                            or negatively impact the relationship.

Source: Erin Meyer, *The Culture Map*
Figure 7.1

Bridging the Gap: Disagreeing

- In a **Confrontational** culture:
  - Don't assume that disagreement with an idea means disapproval of *you*
  - View disagreement as an indication of interest in a topic
  - Distinguish emotional expressiveness from confrontation – speaking with passion is not the same as disagreeing
  - Don't mimic a confrontational style

- In a **Avoids Conflict** culture:
  - Connect with team members prior to meetings so that disagreement can be expressed 1-on-1
  - Use multiple downgraders… (*Maybe, perhaps, I don't know, what do you think?*)

The Culture Map
Source: Erin Meyer

Communicating
- Low Context   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   High Context

Persuading
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- Consensual   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   Top-down

Leading
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Scheduling
- Linear time   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   Flexible Time

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Deciding

| | | | | | US | France | | India | Nigeria |
| Japan | Sweden | Netherlands | Germany | UK | | Brazil | Italy | Russia | China |

Consensual ←――――――――――――――――――――――――――――――――→ Top-down

Consensual Decisions are made in groups through unanimous agreement.

Top-down Decisions are made by individuals (usually the boss).

Source: Erin Meyer, *The Culture Map*
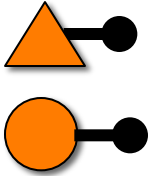Figure 5.3

Deciding, continued

Top-Down: "little d"

Discussion

Implementation
(more discussion, possible revisiting and altering of decision)

decision

Consensual: "big D"

Discussion

Implementation
(no more discussion!)

Decision
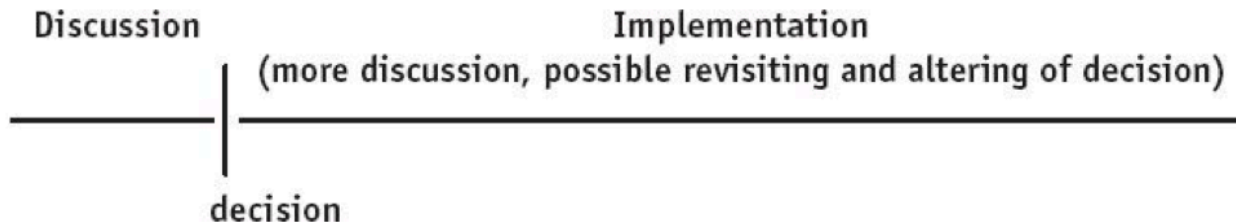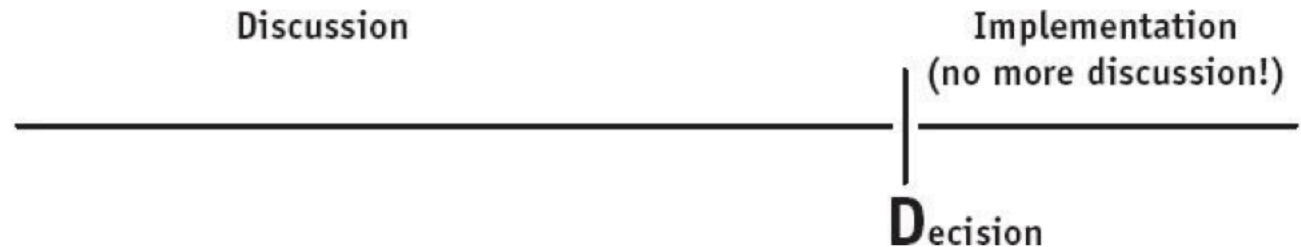
Source: Erin Meyer, *The Culture Map*
Figures 5.1 & 5.2

Bridging the Gap:
Deciding
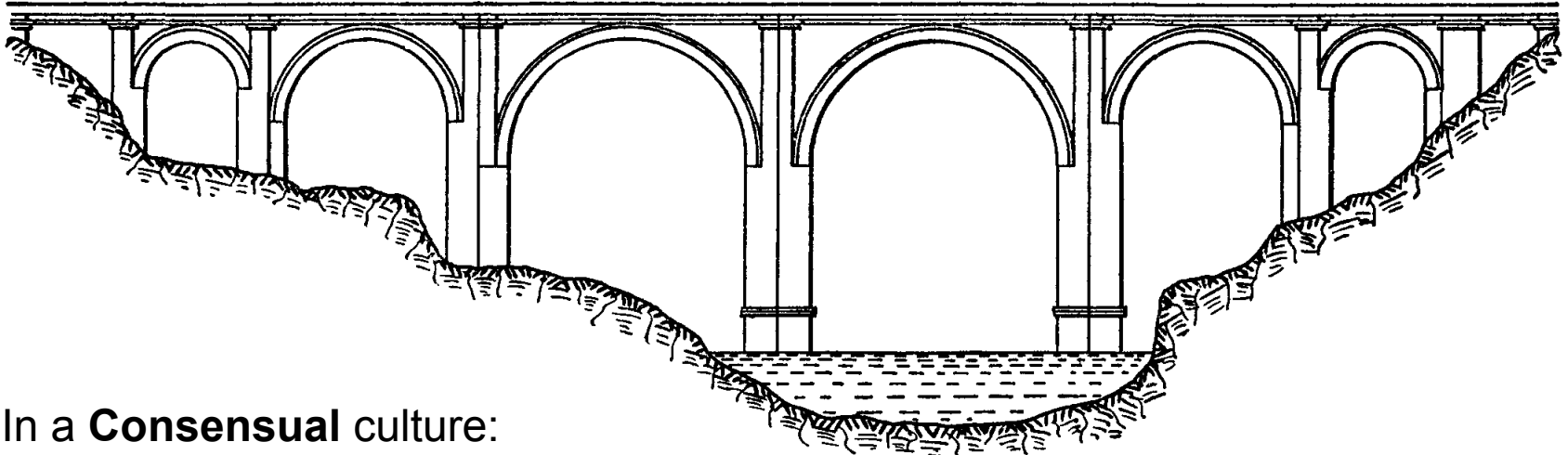
- In a **Consensual** culture:
  - Plan for more time up front
  - Be patient! And focus on how much more efficient the implementation will be when key stakeholders are in alignment
  - Stay in touch with decision-makers, but don't push for a quick decision

- In a **Top-Down** culture:
  - Don't expect to be asked for your input
  - Be explicit about how a decision will be made (e.g., consultation, majority rules, etc.)
  - Be flexible and don't view decisions as final

The Culture Map
Source: Erin Meyer

Communicating
- Low Context   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   High Context

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Deciding
- Consensual   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   Top-down

Leading
- Egalitarian   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   Hierarchical

Scheduling
- Linear time   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   Flexible Time

25

Leading

Denmark	Israel	Canada	US			France	Poland	Saudi Arabia	Japan
Netherlands		Finland		UK	Germany	Italy		Russia	India	Korea
Sweden	Australia				Brazil	Spain	Mexico	Peru	China	Nigeria

◄───►

Egalitarian   **Hierarchical**

Egalitarian The ideal distance between a boss and a subordinate is low. The best boss is a facilitator among equals. Organizational structures are flat. Communication often skips hierarchical lines.

Hierarchical The ideal distance between a boss and a subordinate is high. The best boss is a strong director who leads from the front. Status is important. Organizational structures are multilayered and fixed. Communication follows set hierarchical lines.

Source: Erin Meyer, *The Culture Map*
Figures 4.1

Bridging the Gap: Leading
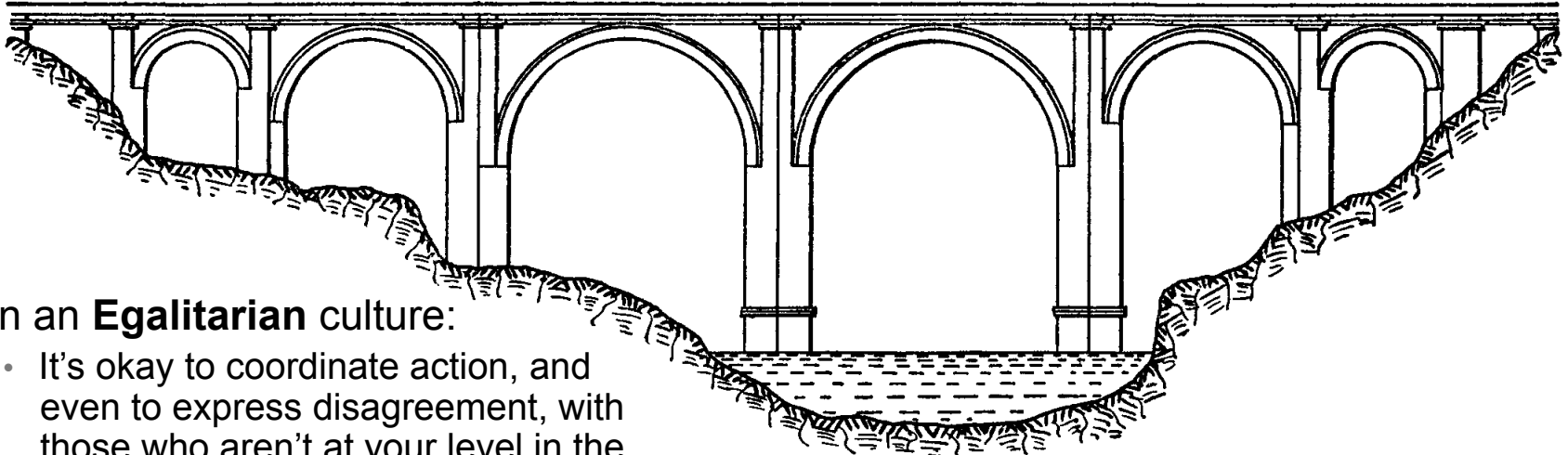
- In an **Egalitarian** culture:
    - It's okay to coordinate action, and even to express disagreement, with those who aren't at your level in the organization
    - In email, don't copy the boss unless it's clear to the recipient why you are doing so
    - Meetings are attended by key stakeholders, regardless of level
    - Don't assume that seating represents a hierarchy

- In a **Hierarchical** culture:
    - Learn the hierarchy and use it to guide actions, such as greeting others and seating arrangements.
    - Coordinate action with your peer level of leadership, or at least keep that person informed
    - Your team will need your approval prior to taking action, and will defer to your opinion
    - Address those at higher levels by their last name, unless they have established a 1st-name basis with you; allow your team to follow custom

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The Culture Map
Source: Erin Meyer

Communicating
- Low Context   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   High Context

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Scheduling
- Linear time   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   Flexible Time

Scheduling

Germany Japan Netherlands   Poland   Spain Italy   Brazil China   Saudi
                                                                                              Arabia
Switzerland Sweden US UK Czech Republic France   Russia Mexico   India Nigeria
              Denmark   Turkey   Kenya

Linear-time ⟵⟶ **Flexible-time**

Linear-time   Project steps are approached in a sequential fashion, completing one task before beginning the next. One thing at a time. No interruptions. The focus is on the deadline and sticking to the schedule. Emphasis is on promptness and good organization over flexibility.

Flexible-time   Project steps are approached in a fluid manner, changing tasks as opportunities arise. Many things are dealt with at once and interruptions accepted. The focus is on adaptability, and flexibility is valued over organization.

Source: Erin Meyer, *The Culture Map*
Figures 8.1

Bridging the Gap: Scheduling
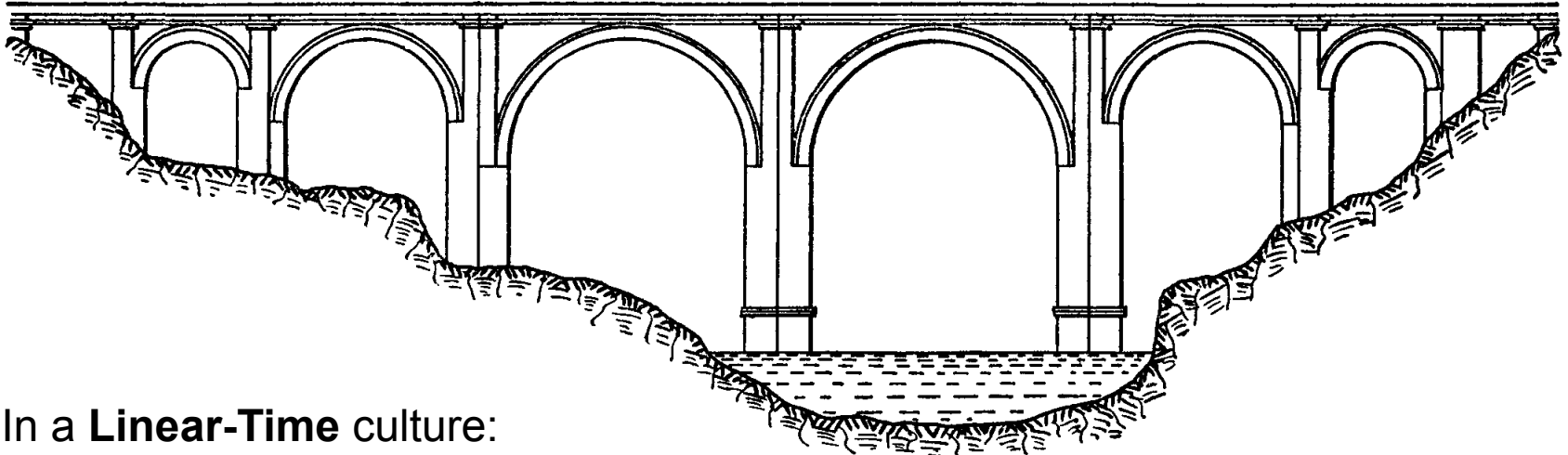
- In a **Linear-Time** culture:
  - Arrive on time and end on time
  - If you are to be late, keep other informed of your arrival time so they can plan accordingly
  - Use an agenda; if an issue is raised that is not on the agenda, don't assume that everyone is willing to discuss it at that meeting

- In a **Flexible-Time** culture:
  - Put relationships before timeliness
  - Use an open agenda, and be willing to entertain topics that aren't on your agenda
  - If you really need others to arrive on time and/or if you really need to end on time, make this explicit and/or make a game of it
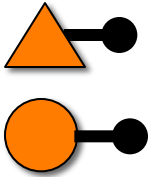
30

The Culture Map
Source: Erin Meyer

Communicating
- Low Context   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   High Context

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Leading
- Egalitarian   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   Hierarchical

Scheduling
- Linear time   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   Flexible Time

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What differences have *you* experienced?

- Regroup with your neighbor

- Revisit your examples from your prior conversation (an experience of misunderstanding between yourself and someone from another culture) through the lens of the cross-cultural differences just discussed

Discuss:

◆**How does *The Culture Map* contribute to your understanding of the misunderstanding?**

◆**What are one or two things that you can do differently to "bridge the gaps" in this relationship?**

The Culture Map
Source: Erin Meyer

Communicating

- Low Context   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   High Context

Persuading

- Applications First   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Principles First

Trusting

- Task-based   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Relationship-based

Evaluating

- Direct (-) feedback   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Indirect (-) feedback

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Leading

- Egalitarian   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Hierarchical

Scheduling

- Linear time   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Flexible Time