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**When cultures collide**

Andy Jones – Head of Risk Engineering

## Migrant workers – the backdrop

- 2004, 21 Chinese migrant workers die in Morecombe Bay. Stark reality of some of the conditions faced by migrants.
- HSE 2006 report concluded ‘Migrant workers are facing higher workplace accident levels because they are concentrated in more hazardous jobs without adequate training and are working longer hours and shifts ‘
- The number of fatalities of non-UK workers up from nine in 2005/6 to 18 in 2007/8 against figures showing that 5.4% of the total workforce comprises migrants – source: Centre for Corporate Accountability 2009 report.
- Full picture still not clear on extent of issue.



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## Literature findings

- 3 major reports published in 2006/07 (HSE, TUC, NWFA) all concluded:
  - Cultural understanding
  - Communication, verbal and non-verbal
  - Diversity management
  - Effective supervision

Were key aspects to improving health and safety of migrants.

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## Migrants – the changing UK picture

- Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century – Irish / Jewish migrants
- 1950's – West Indians
- 1960's / 1970's – Asian subcontinent
- 2000's – Eastern European influx from A8 countries

Significant change from permanent settlement to transient migration.



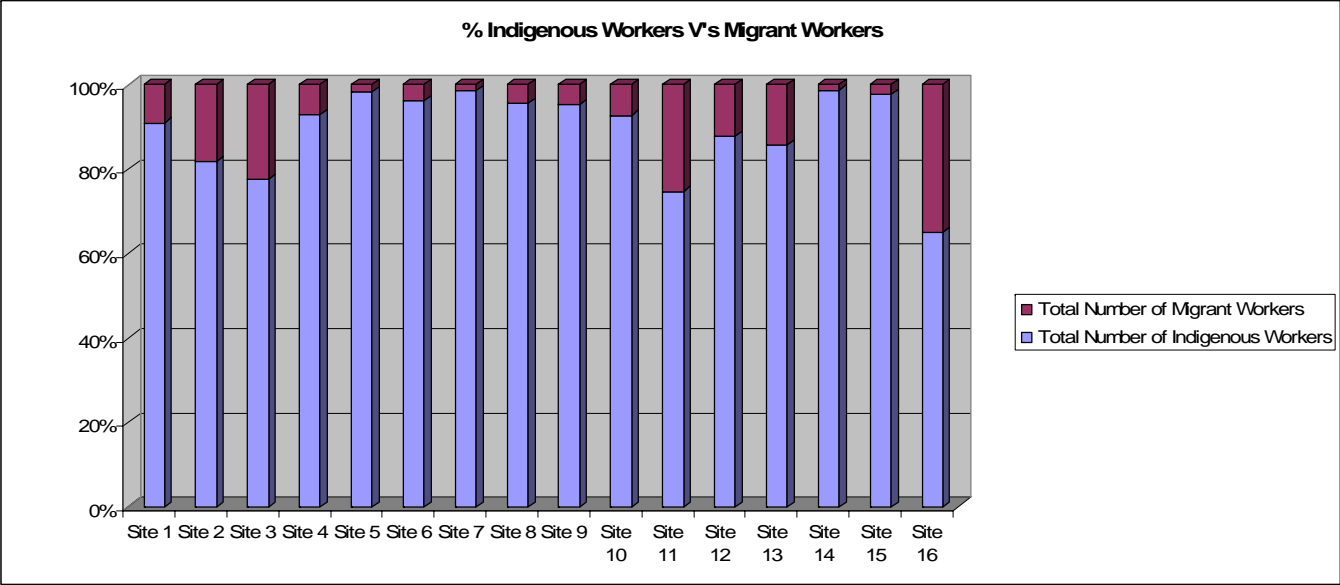
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# Real world complexity

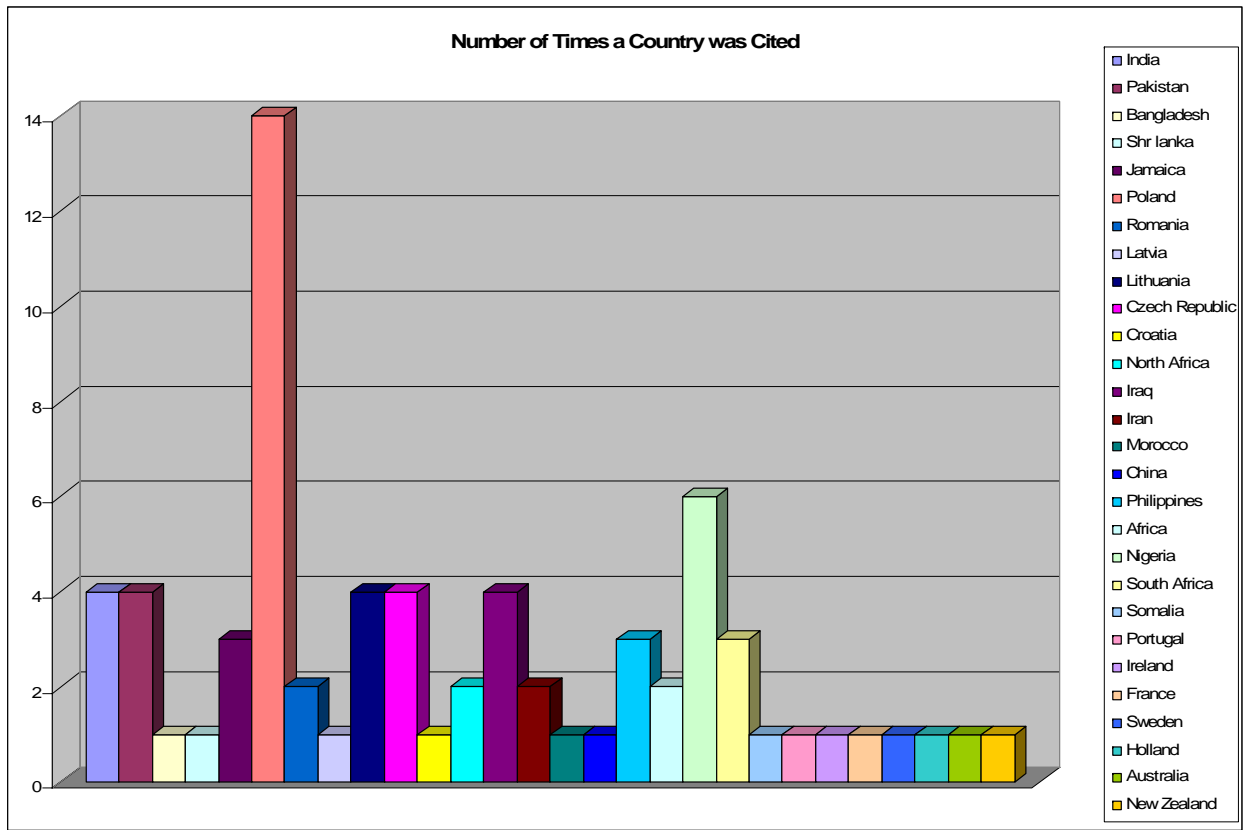


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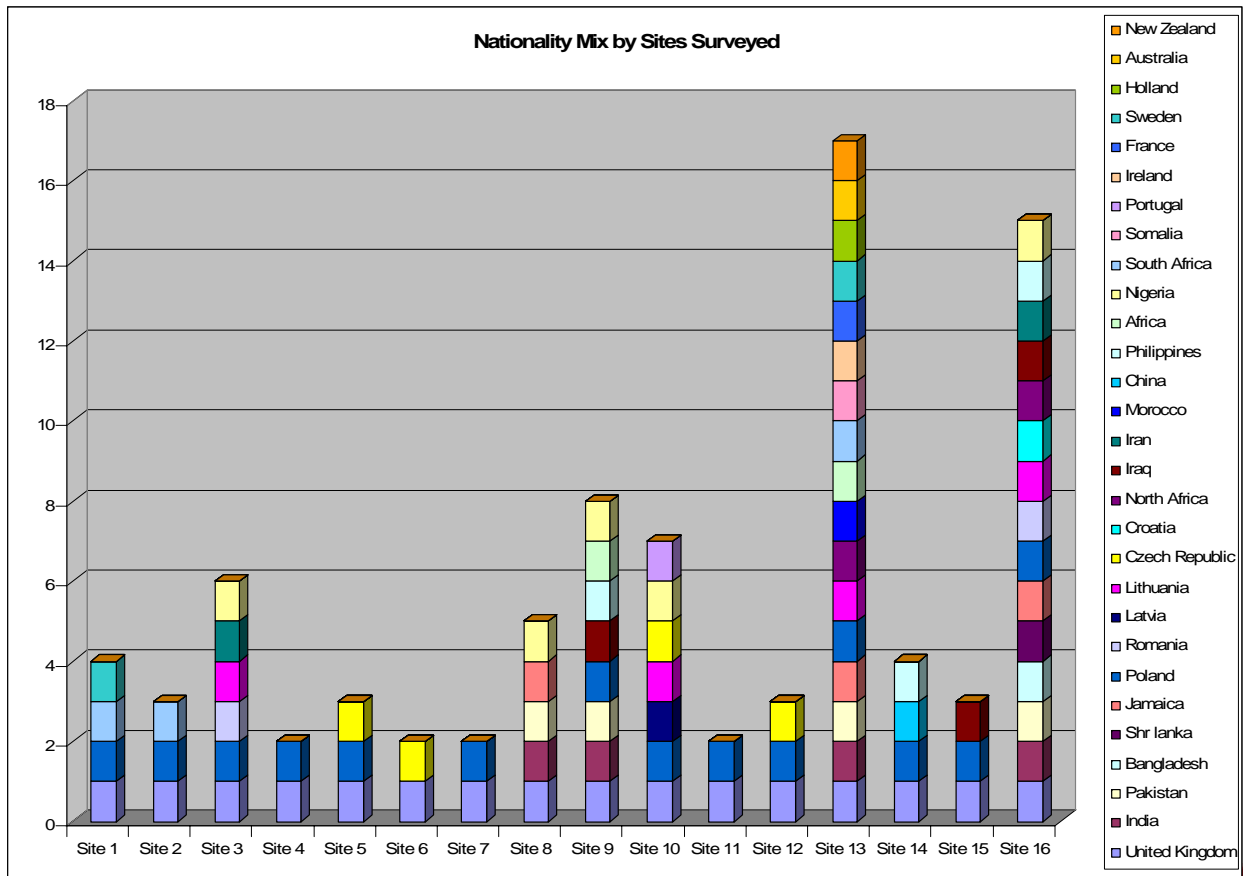
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# Real world complexity



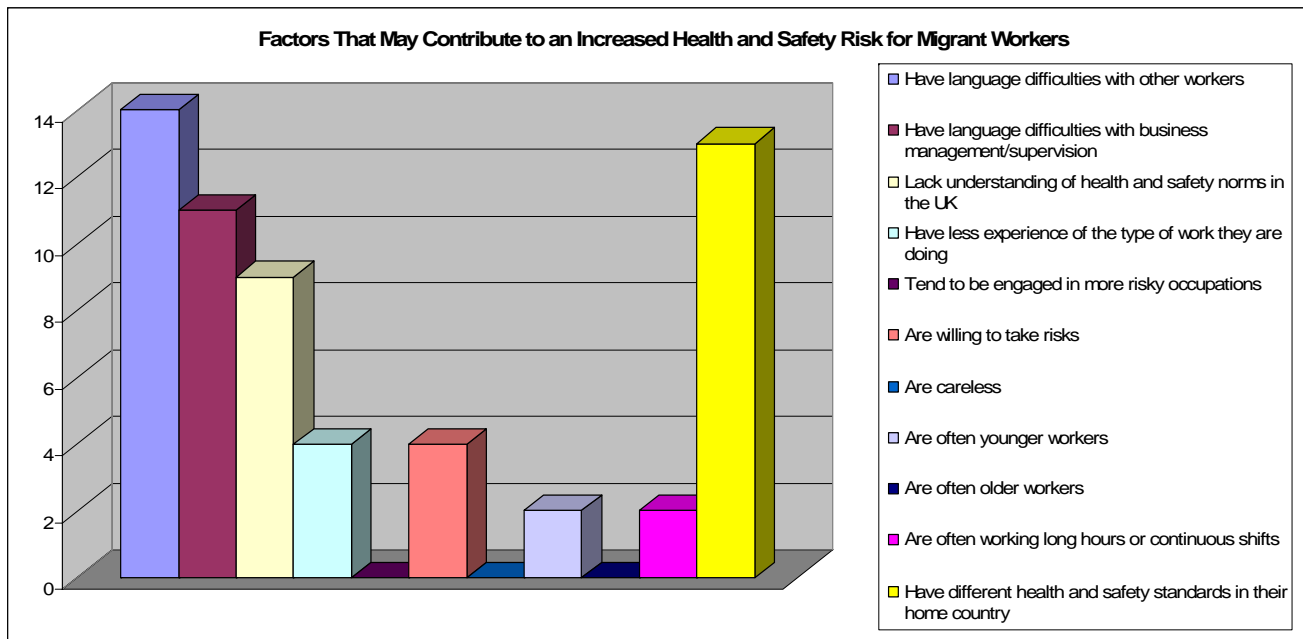
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# Real world complexity



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# Real world complexity



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## The view from Poland

- How was health and safety viewed in Poland?
- Was there a fear amongst migrants in terms of losing their jobs if they didn't say 'yes' to everything?
- Was it acceptable in Poland to question the decisions of Supervisors / Managers?
- Did they find translated documents and signage understandable and useful in terms of conveying health and safety information?
- What mechanism in their view would improve the transfer of health and safety information to migrants?



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## How was health and safety viewed in Poland?

- Not seen as important – why?
  - Legacy of communism
  - Centrally planned organisations, attainment of plan regardless of consequences.
  - Government inspectors subject to bribery therefore enforcement weak.
  - ‘Conflict of competences’, feeling of collective responsibility to carryout any duty on behalf of an absent worker.



“What did YOU do to attain the plan?”



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## Fear amongst migrants of losing their job?

- Was there a fear amongst migrants in terms of losing their jobs if they didn't say 'yes' to everything?
  - Initially regardless if this compromised their own safety, but this diminished over time spent in the UK.



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## Ability to question decisions

- Was it acceptable in Poland to question the decisions of Supervisors / Managers?
  - No, from childhood through to the workplace. Teachers through to Supervisors / Managers were not questioned regardless of their competency or what they were asking.
  - Compare to the individual right in the UK to question a request which is deemed 'unsafe'.



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## Translated documents useful or not?

- Did they find translated documents and signage understandable and useful in terms of conveying health and safety information?
  - Signage often ignored due to communist throw back. Due to all workplaces / public areas carrying political posters.
  - No strong view on translated documents. General feeling was that migrants should speak English and encourage migrants into H&S roles.



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## What mechanism in their view would improve the transfer of health and safety information to migrants?

- To make it mandatory that migrants coming into the UK can speak English.
- To encourage the training of English speaking migrants in health and safety as well as management such that they can take up supervisory positions and therefore bridge the gap between the migrant workforce and UK management.
- For the employer to take a stronger line in terms of compliance with health and safety requirements such that if you break the rules there is a consequence, even if that means losing your job.



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## Not just a UK issue

- Hispanics migrating to the USA
- Italians, Croatians and Koreans in Australia
- Filipinos migrating throughout Asia

Cases involving the above all cited :

- Culture
- Language barriers
- Communication
- Lack of specific skills and training

For adverse levels of accidents to migrants in relation to host country.

Associated Press in 2004 stated 'Mexican workers in several Southern and Western states of America were four times more likely to die than the average US born worker at a time when overall US workplace fatalities are falling'



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## Culture – it's a complex thing

National culture – it's what makes us who we are.

Taylor (1924) stated, "Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by members of society".

Hofstede (2003), defined national culture as 'the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another'

Organisational culture – no single definition but.....

reflects *shared* behaviours, beliefs, attitudes and values regarding *organisational goals, functions and procedures* which are seen to characterise particular organisations' (Furnham & Gunter, 1993).

Safety culture – again no single definition but.....

positive safety cultures are characterised by communications founded on mutual trust, shared perceptions of the importance of safety, and by confidence in the efficacy of preventative measures



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# National culture and everyday behaviour

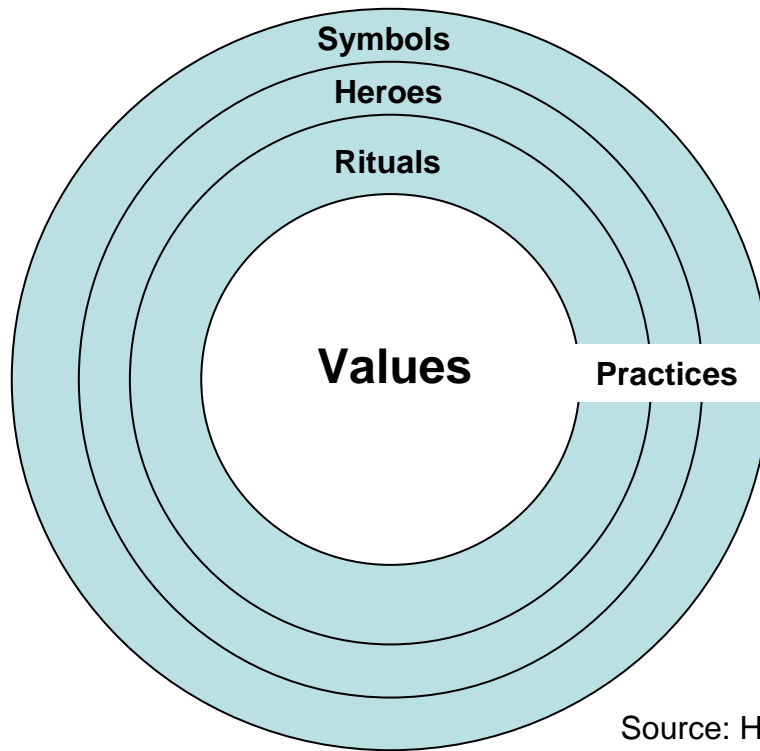


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## National culture and it's deep roots



'the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another'



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## Describing national culture

- Hofstede's 5 dimensions:
  - Power Distance (degree of equality or inequality)
  - Individualism (degree society reinforces individual or collective achievement)
  - Masculinity (degree of traditional masculine role model, control and power)
  - Uncertainty Avoidance Index (level of intolerance for uncertainty within society)
  - Long-Term Orientation (degree society embraces long-term devotion to tradition)



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## The dimensions from a H&S prospective

Power Distance (degree of equality or inequality)

- High
  - Growth of inequalities, caste system, little significant upward mobility.
  - Unequal status of workers, certain work groups exposed to higher risks, less concern for safety.
- Low
  - Little emphasis on differences among citizens, equal opportunity is stressed.
  - Shared concern for hazards, senior mgt committed to safety.

Source: Westergaard (2006)



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## The dimensions from a H&S prospective

Individualism (degree society reinforces individual or collective achievement)

- High
  - Individual is paramount.
  - Safety is a personal responsibility.
- Low
  - Society is more collectivist.
  - Safety is a collective responsibility; each worker is responsible for the others.

Source: Westergaard (2006)



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## The dimensions from a H&S prospective

Masculinity (degree of traditional masculine role model, control and power)

- High
  - High degree of gender differentiation.
  - Gender prescribed work takes place. High level management is key to implementation of safety programmes.
- Low
  - Males / females treated equally.
  - Safety programmes are implemented in flat organisational structures.

Source: Westergaard (2006)



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## The dimensions from a H&S prospective

Uncertainty Avoidance Index (level of intolerance for uncertainty within society)

- High
  - Rule-orientated laws; rules, regulations and controls instituted.
  - Laws, rules, controls to handle well-defined and ill-defined hazards.
- Low
  - Less rule-orientated, more readily accepts change.
  - More flexible options for handling hazards, more likely to take risks.

Source: Westergaard (2006)



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## The dimensions from a H&S prospective

Long-Term Orientation (degree society embraces long-term devotion to tradition)

- High
  - Prescribed to values of long-term commitment and respect for tradition.
  - Long-term commitment to safety, learning through continuous organisational feedback systems, monitoring and analysis.
- Low
  - Rapid change, no reinforcement of the long-term commitment to safety in favour of short-term gains.
  - Change can occur more rapidly if initiated there are few impediments to change.

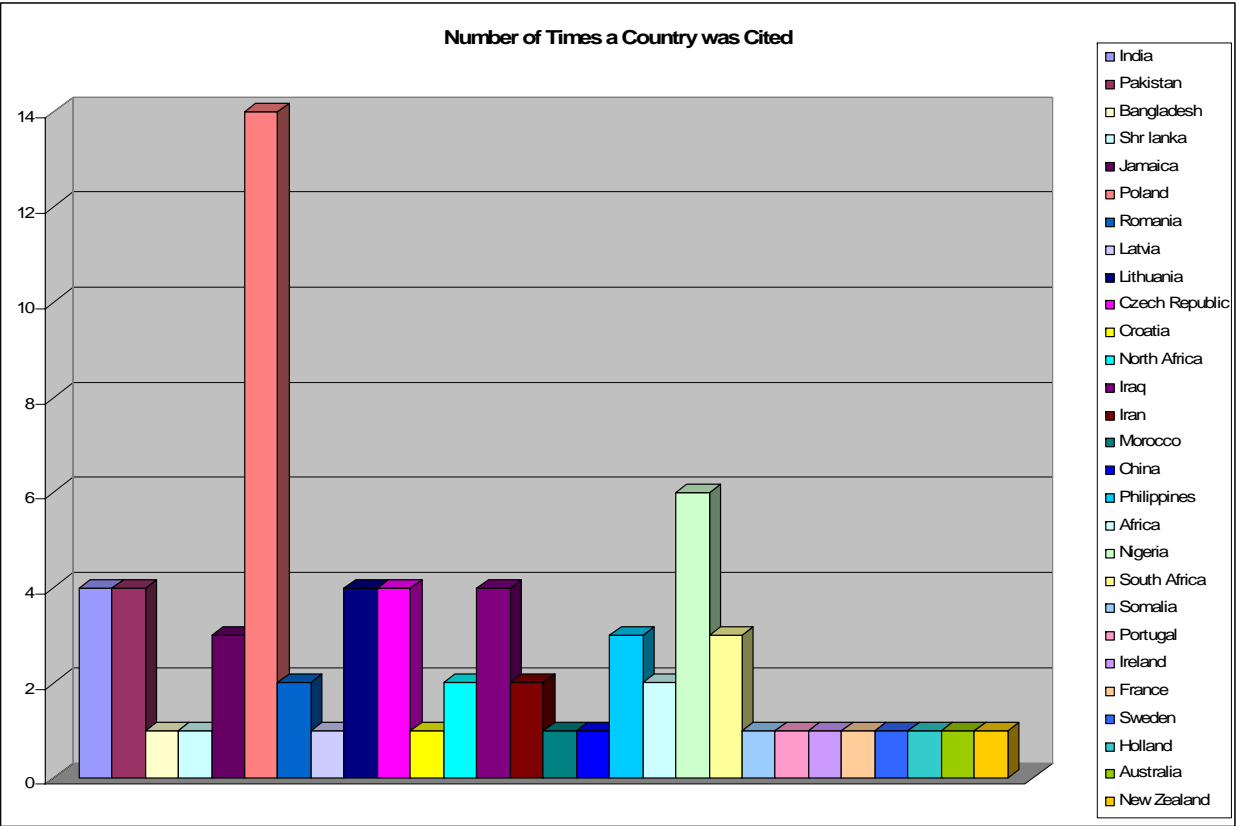
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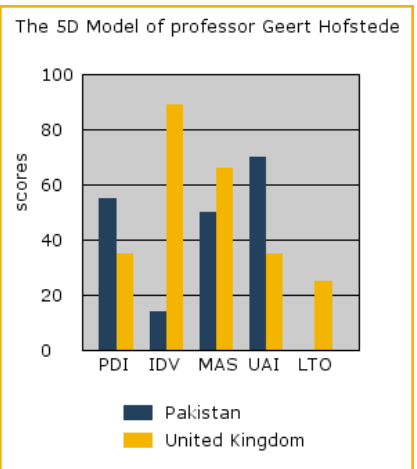
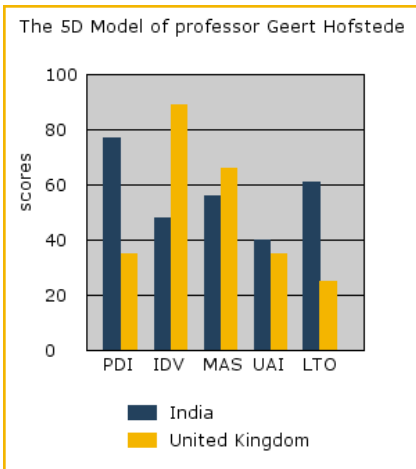
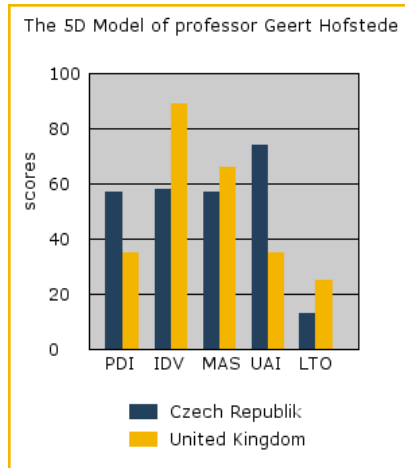
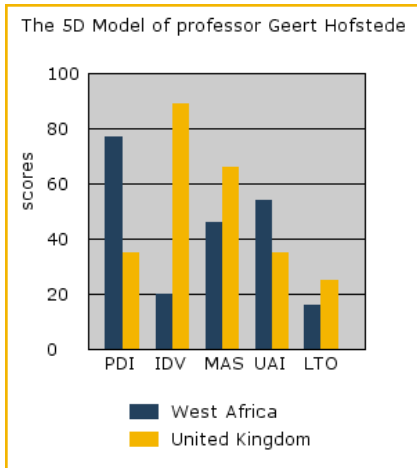
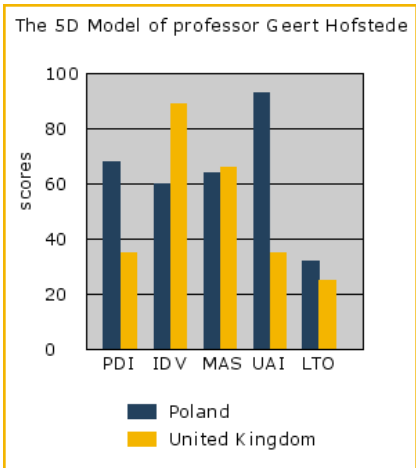
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# Going back to our real world complexity



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# Comparing UK traits with others



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## Comparing UK traits with others

With exception of Australia and New Zealand all the other represented countries in general exhibit:

- Higher degree of power distance, indicating higher level of inequality. Look for strong, directional management.
- Lower degree of individualism, indicating a more collective approach.
- A preference towards reducing uncertainty through rules, laws and regulations.

Clues to how manage individuals from other countries?



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## What can we learn from this?

- National cultural values and traits look to establish 'differences' between countries whereas organisational and safety cultures seek to establish 'shared' values.
  - Is there conflict with an individual's deep rooted values and perceptions of the world?
  - Due to transient nature of migration, is there enough time for an individual to be influenced by the organisation and it's culture?
  - Can we use Hofstede's dimensions to better understand the driving forces within a multi-cultural workforce?
  - Individualistic v's collectiveness is the most consistent difference to UK traits. Is this the starting point to re-evaluate management strategies?



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## What can we learn from this?

- Acceptance within organizations that culturally diverse workforces are likely to become more common.
- Indigenous managers and supervisors require training in cultural diversity and how that relates to the management approach taken.

For instance: countries that rate high on the Power Distance Index (PDI) dimension will tend to look for strong, directional management and feel uncomfortable if asked for opinion or expected to question the requests of superiors. In difference to those countries scoring lower who tend towards a more participative approach to management.



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## What can we learn from this?

- Appreciation of the potential impact of national cultural traits on H&S policy, management systems and approaches.
- Need to revisit what is meant by organisational culture and what it is seeking to achieve and does it address cultural diversity?
- Assessments of risk and controls derived from the need to consider not just language but also whether cultural background introduces a different prospective on risk that needs to be considered in the evaluation of suitable mitigation strategies resulting from the risk assessment.



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## One final thought

It should not be forgotten that these individuals are often the last pair of hands that touch the products that go to the customers upon which your organisation's reputation and profitability depends.

**Thank you**



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