



Bond Benton

**THE CHALLENGE
OF WORKING
FOR AMERICANS**

*Perspectives of an
International Workforce*



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Perspectives of an International Workforce

Bond Benton

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THE CHALLENGE OF WORKING FOR AMERICANS
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This book is dedicated to Daniela Peterka-Benton, who taught me a great deal about the challenges and opportunities in partnerships between Americans and non-Americans. It's also dedicated to Emily, who has been the greatest result of such a partnership.

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CHAPTER 1

The End of Isolation

In 2012, Joseph Corey III published what *Daily Kos* called the definitive “book for our times.” Corey’s tome offered help to job seekers and validated the importance of an oft overlooked dimension of American professional life. Titled *The Seven Secrets of Great Walmart People Greeters: Powerful Lessons in Navy Blue & Khaki*, Corey’s book succinctly identifies the functions and characteristics of being an effective greeter in an American mass retail chain. With sage advice including welcoming every customer, directing customers to items, thanking outgoing customers for visiting the store, and handing out Walmart promotional stickers to small children, Corey’s life lessons for aspiring Walmart greeters speak to those looking to make their mark in the field and successfully work in American retail (Corey 2012).

Unfortunately for both Corey and for Walmart, the overt friendliness and involved level of service demanded by the position are not universally appreciated throughout the world. In 2006, Walmart closed shop and cut its losses in Germany after eight years in the market. While Walmart Germany suffered from a range of structural and competitive disadvantages, one particular theme was consistently cited as a reason for the company’s failure: The greeters creeped Germans out. The discomfort experienced by German customers was so intense that “shoppers, unaware of [greeters’] key role in Walmart’s service concept, repeatedly complained that they had been harassed by strangers on store premises” (Knorr and Arndt 2003, 22).

Compounding the unease caused by the greeter concept was a range of other distinct dimensions of Walmart’s workplace culture. The required morning pep rally for employees was viewed as absurd by Walmart’s German staff, who frequently found an excuse to use the restroom rather

than participate. Restrictions against workplace dating were also found to be both strange and unsettling for employees. In sum, the failure to comprehend the unique cultural, economic, and workplace values that exist outside the United States doomed Walmart in its attempt at international expansion. The “Powerful Lessons in Navy Blue & Khaki” proved to be instructive—though in a way not likely imagined by Walmart or by Mr. Corey.

Walmart’s culture shock has been shared by many other companies and organizations. The circumstances institutions now face in a globalized world have ensured that it is no longer possible to stand pat with an opaque view to the values of the world. Corporations, governmental institutions, and NGOs must interact with partners from all over the world and consider constituencies outside their borders. With its resources, power, and aggressive culture, the United States faces a paradoxical position in this new landscape of international interaction. Insulated by geography, the American gaze has historically been inward with limited consideration of world events or knowledge of other cultures. To maintain its international standing, however, U.S. institutions are tasked with expansion overseas.

For many countries, international interaction is a function of location. The countries of Europe, for example, must interact with one another. These interactions are frequently not amicable, but the countries’ proximity necessitates the existence of such interactions. Without similar exigencies for intercultural engagement, American organizations have been thrust into outreach for which they are frequently ill equipped. Whether it is a factory opening up a plant in Asia, a retail chain expanding into Europe, or an NGO supporting a development project in Africa, American leaders now face a reality in which they must manage a non-American workforce. That is the focus of this book—to understand the unique values of American workplace culture and how those values frequently clash with those of individuals not acculturated to them.

The foundation of this tension can be found in the technological developments of the last hundred years. From the development of the automobile and the airplane to the creation of telecommunication to the growing ubiquity of computer technology, it could be credibly argued that a consequence of technology has been to make the world dramatically smaller. This movement toward a smaller world has been noted by scholars in virtually every field and is, perhaps, most accurately stated in Marshall McLuhan’s famous concept of a “global village.” Although

McLuhan wrote when much of the technology of that shrunk the world was in its infancy, it is undeniable that we now fully inhabit that village.

I currently teach at a university in rural upstate New York. As an experiment, I ask my students at the start of each term how many of them regularly interact with friends who live outside the United States. Over the last five years and in looking at the results for thousands of students, a point has been reached where virtually *every* student affirms that they are connected to people outside the United States. In probing the outliers, they typically respond that they consciously avoid electronic communication as a reactionary stance to its widespread use. Those outliers, however, have decreased with each subsequent poll, and it is increasingly clear that the relationships of young people are no longer confined to the discrete borders of nations and continents. While many would laud this sort of internationalization, the technology that connects has created new problems of interaction that didn't exist in the isolated world of the past.

With the coalescence of the global village, characteristics of village tensions have now been projected on a global scale. The process of outgrouping, for example, is a characteristic of small community communication (Triandis, Bontempo, and Villareal 1988) that has been magnified to the connected international audience. In 2002, Ghyslain Raza decided to reenact a scene from *Star Wars* wielding a golf-ball retriever as a light saber. Fighting against an imaginary army, Raza's corpulent and clumsy 14-year-old movements were the sort of embarrassing and awkward moments of adolescence that many of us have had and are happy to forget. Unfortunately, Raza recorded this performance and forgot to retrieve the video from the camera after he concluded fighting the legions of the Dark Side. When classmates found the video, it was uploaded to a file-sharing site and became an almost immediate Internet sensation. The video, dubbed "*Star Wars* Kid," has been viewed over one billion times by people throughout the world. The interconnectedness created by technology means that people's mistakes and missteps are now scrutinized by a global audience far outside their immediate circle. In Mr. Raza's case, the judgment of the global village had profoundly negative consequences:

Ghyslain, devastated by his sudden celebrity and the relentless teasing that came with it, dropped out of school and reportedly finished the semester in a psychiatric ward. His parents state, "Ghyslain had to endure, and still endures today, harassment and derision from his high-school mates and the public at large . . . [he] will be under psychiatric care for an indefinite

amount of time.” The stigma could make it difficult to continue his education, find employment, and might necessitate that he change his name (Popkin 2007).

This evaluative dimension of globalization is not unique to individual behavior. Companies, organizations, and institutions are now scrutinized across borders in a way that was similarly unthinkable in the past. In 2004, Subway restaurants in Germany began running advertisements to promote Morgan Spurlock’s film *Super Size Me*. The promotions were part of partnership designed to frame Subway as a healthier alternative to McDonald’s, the restaurant chain lampooned in the film. A particular advertisement used by Subway incorporated the *Super Size Me* film poster with a brief essay titled, “Warum sind die Amis so fett?” (“Why are the Yanks so fat?”). Beside the text were images of a morbidly obese Statue of Liberty greedily consuming fries and hamburgers. Again, national advertisements like this were previously insulated from consideration by a larger international audience. In this case, however, a quick photograph with a smart phone and an instant upload resulted in an immediate global controversy. Tom DeLay, the U.S. Speaker of the House at the time, went as far as issuing a statement against Subway, stating, “It is clear that Subway has done very well for decades due to the patronage of Americans. For Subway to thumb its nose at its American customers . . . in a foreign country is very concerning” (Ivanovich 2004). Ken Boehn of the National League and Policy Center stated that “Subway has defined a new low in corporate behavior with this campaign. Inflaming cultural tensions to increase market share is immoral and dangerous. Americans deserve to know about Subway’s campaign to insult us abroad and to attack our national symbols” (National Legal and Policy Center 2004). The Center for Individual Freedom suggested that Subway’s marketing was particularly distasteful, calling the ad “a shameless anti-American effort to increase sales in Europe” (Center for Individual Freedom 2004). With the threat of boycott and continued outrage on the part of the American public, Subway ultimately removed the offending advertisement and apologized.

Yet such instances are hardly isolated. When Domino’s in Japan introduced an app for online pizza ordering that featured a cute anime character to assist customers, CEO Scott Oelkers decided to introduce the product personally. In a commercial for the Japanese market that was called “creepy,” “bizarre,” and “unsettling,” Oelkers gave an extended

speech about the benefits of using the anime character to order pizza (Ashcraft 2013). With awkward body language and slightly sensual gestures toward the tiny anime figure, Oelkers was dubbed “pervert CEO” in Japanese online forums, and the commercial received international ridicule. Such inconsistency of message when engaging with international constituencies is not isolated to the private sector, though. When the anti-Islamic film *Innocence of Muslims* was discovered on YouTube, anti-Western protests occurred throughout the Middle East (Mackey and Stack 2013). While the film was roundly criticized by U.S. institutions, the idea of allowing offensive speech was not widely understood, especially in countries where the media is frequently subservient to national interests. In all of these cases, the lessons of a technologically connected world retain much salience. The comforts of isolation can no longer be enjoyed by individuals and institutions.

With the challenge associated with engagement, it is tempting to consider a retreat to those comforts. Unfortunately, isolation is neither technologically feasible nor economically viable. For the modern organization, these are challenges that must necessarily be confronted. For companies, even a cursory glance at world markets brings the realization that confining business to a specific national border is both impractical and self-defeating. In looking longitudinally at a range of items related to internationalization—including language, transportation, and communication—the International Monetary Fund has found quantifiable “evidence of globalization or, more generally, of the declining importance of geography” (Coe, Subramanian, and Tamirisa 2007, 54). With market maturity in the West and emerging markets throughout the world, it is impossible to confine business within national borders. This required engagement, however, is in no way unique to private sector institutions. Governments and NGOs are increasingly tasked with building broader connections throughout the world, particularly in relation to foreign policy.

Foreign policy was previously the space of diplomats engaging in important activities behind closed doors. Increasingly, however, citizen activists, NGOs, domestic ministries, private enterprises, academics, and other actors participate directly in foreign policy and frame public debates about foreign policy issues (Nye 2004). Batora (2005) goes on to suggest a change in thinking from the traditional concept of state actors and state power toward a postmodern orientation of images and influence. “Power,” he states, “no longer stems solely from persuasion

or coercion, but increasingly from information sharing and attraction, which are essential for the development of soft power” (1). Promotion of this soft power is the focus of public diplomacy. The soft power that serves as the basis for public diplomacy includes “activities of multiple actors and organizations with impacts on foreign publics—artists, art galleries and music channels; civic activists and NGOs; politicians, political parties and political philosophers; writers and literary associations; journalists and media groups; business people, enterprises and products; academics and universities; religious leaders and religious groups” (Batora 2005, 2). Thus, the perceptions of the interconnected world not only shape perceptions of individuals, businesses, and organizations. The very foundation of international power is now linked to the image projected by whole nations.

Since World War II and increasingly after the terrorist attacks of 2001, the concept of reaching out to the world has gained traction in the United States as direct two-way engagement with world populations has been made viable through technological innovation. While tanks and missiles still form the basis of how power is conceived, Nye argues that the U.S. military deterred Soviet aggression, but that “when the Berlin Wall finally collapsed, it was destroyed not by an artillery barrage but by hammers and bulldozers wielded by those who had lost faith in communism” (2009, 163).

After the Cold War, interest in this sort of engagement waned and funding for U.S. public diplomacy outreach was reduced by some 40 percent (Barron 2007). Looking back upon this period, it is quite easy to project some sense of hubris to these decisions. Seemingly at both a national and institutional level, the United States fostered a culture of growing indifference toward understanding the world and reflecting on international perceptions. After the September 11 attacks and as the economic downturn demonstrated the stagnation of Western market size, the folly of such collective navel-gazing became difficult to ignore.

In their succinctly titled book *Why Do People Hate America?*, Sardar and Davies (2002) argue for widespread world animosity toward the political and economic culture of the United States. They state, “There are hardly any universals left in our postmodern times, but loathing for America is about as close as we can get for a universal sentiment: it is the one dynamic that unites fundamentalists and liberals, Arabs and Latin Americans, Asians and Europeans, and even the overshadowed Canadians with the rest of the world” (2002, 195). Worldwide trends of the

period showed that the percentage of people with a favorable image of the United States decreased 11 percent in Japan, 18 percent in Argentina, 30 percent in Germany, and currently stands at only 51 percent in the U.K. (Bellamy and Weinberg 2008). The collective failure of the United States to engage in the increasingly global discussion is highlighted in this 2003 report initiated by the federal government:

We must underscore the common ground in both our values and policies. We have failed to listen and failed to persuade. We have not taken the time to understand our audience, and we have not bothered to help them understand us. We cannot afford such shortcomings (Djerejian 2003, 24).

In this book, a particular focus of those shortcomings is the failure of American organizations to adapt to the workplace culture of multinational institutions. Organizations from the United States operating abroad face a unique set of challenges. There are, undoubtedly, core values for such organizations that cannot be dismissed when operating abroad. At the same time, however, the values of the workplace differ substantially from country to country. As such, the multi-national organization faces the challenge of balance. Which organizational principles can't be mitigated or adapted to local cultures? What are the workplace values of the community in which we are operating that must be integrated into our policies and structures? How can we assess our effectiveness at achieving such a balance? Any of these questions could lead to a compelling conversation that might yield a happier, more productive, and more culturally inclusive workplace. Unfortunately for many organizations, such a conversation hasn't happened, and the implications have been disastrous for workplace culture.

Any discussion of the cultural dimensions of workplace culture typically begins with the work of Geert Hofstede. For nearly 30 years, his investigation into the values and work attitudes of varying cultural groups has been a foundational element to cultural research. Specifically, Hofstede's 1980 study is regularly one of the most referenced pieces of research on the relationship between culture and attitudes and actions of employees in an organization (Bhagat and McQuaid 1982). His research has been instrumental in furthering an understanding of cross-cultural management theory and practice, revealing that members of different societies hold divergent values concerning the nature of organizations and the interpersonal relationships within. In his seminal work beginning with

116,000 questionnaires completed by IBM employees from 50 countries, Hofstede researched how workplace culture differs across nations. IBM was selected based on the assumption that rigid corporate structure would ensure worldwide workplace homogeneity in all areas except culture. He outlined key cross-cultural dimensions capable of affecting the values in work orientation. According to Fernandez, et al. (1997):

Values are believed to influence the interpretation of response outcomes of work, causing some outcomes to be positive reinforcements and others negative Inadequate awareness of international variations in cultural systems, including values, can exacerbate expatriate failure (44).

The key values Hofstede initially examined included power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism, and masculinity. His research on 53 national cultures argues that a culture can be ranked according to its corresponding score in each area. Each element in his initial research produced a sort of continuum along which the work-related problem-solving mechanisms of a culture could be revealed. A culture with a high power distance, for example, might be inclined to defer to authority for guidance and direction. A culture with a low power distance may seek multi-level discussion and consensus. Such distinctions between cultures have enormous implications for the values, attitudes, procedures, and policies of the workplace. In fact, variance in cultures may moderate the relationship between managerial practices and organizational effectiveness; that is, cultural differences may enhance or diminish the impact of managerial practices as they bear on job attitudes (Hofstede and Hofstede 2005).

Anecdotally, these sorts of differences can be readily discerned when examining cultural practices. On a trip to Austria, Bing (2004) observed that farmers kept their woodpiles in precise and orderly stacks (Austria scores low on uncertainty avoidance). On the subway in Austria, people are expected to purchase and hold tickets on their own (Austria scores low on power distance). Contrast this to the American train system in which large gates and officials police passenger traffic. The easy application and empirical validation of Hofstede has continued to give his work traction.

While widely read, Hofstede is certainly not alone in creating defined measures for the challenges faced in the intercultural workplace. Freitag and Stokes (2009) define numerous other metrics developed by scholars and practitioners concerned variations in workplace culture. Relationship versus task orientation is another variable that can complicate

multinational workplaces. While some cultures largely view the workplace as a transactional relationship where services are performed in exchange for compensation, others may view the workplace as a relational environment where personal connections with coworkers are the primary source of motivation. The concept of time as fixed or flexible has also been an area extensively studied in the field of cross-cultural management.

In sum, an understanding of the myriad of cultural variation has been shown to be a necessary component of the effective adaptation of organizational policy for multinational organizations (Friedman 2007). The dual nature of institutions requires organizations to balance creating standard practices that are globally effective with the need to localize workplace policy to the practices of the community in which the organization operates. Empirical application has shown that there will consistently be a gap between the efficacy of standardized policy and their application to divergent cultural contexts. There will consistently be a tension between local practices and standardized institutional policy. As organizations expand globally, the number of variables that must align for new organizational initiatives increases exponentially, and that makes mastery of change management more challenging—and more important.

Failure to account for these challenges was perhaps never more apparent than in the export of that most American of institutions: Disneyland. Disney's previous success in opening the Tokyo Disneyland resort had emboldened the company to pursue additional international expansion by opening a theme park in Europe. Unfortunately, much of the foundation of Disney's success in Tokyo was forgotten as they pursued their European expansion. In Tokyo, Disney gave operational control to the Japanese-owned Oriental Land Company, which ensured compliance and deference to local values. There was also the happy coincidence that both American and Japanese cultures have an affinity for kitsch and an appreciation of homogenized and enthusiastic customer service. Euro Disney in Paris, however, enjoyed no such advantages, and the failure to adapt to the needs of the French workplace was a significant reason for the park's initial and near catastrophic failure. Matusitz (2010) argues that when "the Walt Disney Company attempted to impose U.S. customs on French workers and management, it was a debacle" (231). In the first month of operation alone, nearly 3000 employees quit out of dissatisfaction with the workplace culture. The emphasis of English over French for employee communication furthered the staffs' perception of an out-of-touch and imperialistic enterprise. The strict application of Disney's "Look book,"

which specifies employee grooming and appearance standards, was seen as oppressive and invasive to the more free-spirited French workforce. Regulations requiring a minimum of 60 seconds of smiling in customer interactions proved even more difficult for French employees to tolerate. Bryman (2006) calls the forced smiling of American service culture “Emotional Labor,” which is a major site of resistance in communities unaccustomed to the practice. The end result?

All the difficulties that the Walt Disney Company experienced in its attempt to transfer its U.S. corporate philosophy to France contributed to making Euro Disney a less friendly and less orderly place. It also contributed to a less clean environment. For instance, it was not unusual to see untidy bathrooms, bathrooms with broken stall doors, grounds that were littered, an insufficient number of sidewalk sweepers in sight (a notable feature at other Disney parks), and, in one instance, a quarrel between a food server and a guest over a bill (Matusitz 2010, 232).

Disney ultimately retreated from its very American employee standards, adopted an increasingly French managerial structure, created a more multilingual environment, and undertook a costly rebranding from Euro Disney to Disneyland Paris. While workplace satisfaction has improved and the resort has become more financially stable, the stigma of those early missteps remains: The park still retains the public perception of a significant miscalculation. Disney, however, is hardly alone as an organization that wrongly considered the world from the narrow lens of American values. And it’s not difficult to see why.

America has a robust and aggressive culture. A trip to many world capitals brings images of people wearing Levi’s jeans, listening to American music, watching American films and television, riding American motorcycles, and using American slang. It is not surprising, then, that Americans perceive a world that is “like us” or at least a world that “wants to be like us.” This mistake, that the world’s love of American commerce is synonymous with a love of American culture, is one that is easily made. If a group of people look like “us,” talk like “us,” and are interested in the same things as “us,” it should follow that they are like “us” in terms of their employment expectations.

Compounding this confusion on the part of Americans is the fact that culture and commerce are more inextricably linked in the United States than elsewhere. The immigrant experience of American history

undoubtedly also plays a role in the “American World” narrative. This history of the United States has frequently involved the arrival of those from far away seeking to integrate into American life. The arrival of non-Americans into an American workplace could, correspondingly, be seen as an extension of that immigration story. That fundamental misconception of non-Americans prepared to (metaphorically) become American through employment at an American organization is an illusion. The dangers of this illusion are clear, but we’re left with hard questions about why it persists.

With anecdotes and generalizations like these, it’s difficult to build a credible and verifiable answer. Indeed, for those seriously engaging the challenges of building a productive international workforce, such a plurality of selectively chosen stories does little to offer the kind of concrete analysis necessary for formulating policies. Rather than speculating on the perceptions of non-Americans in American workplaces, the approach offered by this book relies on that perspective as its foundation. Over a five-year period, I had the unique opportunity to survey nearly 600 non-Americans working in the overtly American organizational structure of the U.S. State Department. These survey results are compelling, enlightening, frightening, and demand serious consideration on the part of executives, leaders, and those concerned with world perception of the United States.

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CHAPTER 2

A Not So Small World

Statistician and famed baseball historian Bill James coined a term—“bullshit dump”—that is quite useful in understanding any attempt at quantifying what is meant by cultural difference. He writes, “In all discussions, the least precise areas become bullshit dumps, elements of the discussion which are used to reconcile our formal logic to our intuitive sense” (James 2001, 349). James was specifically writing about the concept of “clutch players,” who excel in stressful situations in sporting events. While we know that some people perform better under duress, the exact extent of duress required to improve their performance necessarily is hard to quantify. Then there’s the issue that stress (in the main) is infrequent, leading to an incomplete sample in judging a person’s clutch ability. Thus, what is attributed to someone being either good in the clutch or choking could merely be the result of dumb luck. James goes on to suggest that bullshit dumps are not unique to discussing sports. Discussions of politics, media influence, psychology, and religion are all places where the inadequacy of formal logic calls for evidence from an intuitive sense. It’s important to note that James didn’t discount such intuitive evidence; rather, he argues that an element of intellectual restraint should accompany “facts” derived from intuition and feeling.

With that in mind, it’s important to approach the concept of cultural difference with some skepticism and healthy hesitation. Suggesting certain cultures hold certain values carries with it the unfortunate consequence of stereotyping. Sharing cultural meanings within a society—for instance, from parents to children—may be imperfect, so that over time the cultural definitions evolve. Earley (2006) contends that cultural meanings are typically not shared uniformly by an entire society, and they are not shared precisely. Any two individuals from a given culture may hold slightly different meanings for the same event or construct, and these

two individuals may have shared meanings with other parties in the society but not with one another. Earley (2006) sums up these challenges by describing the trap of defining cultural difference. He argues this “trap is inevitable if one uses values measured by individual perception as an indicant of collective culture” (928).

Put simply, people may be part of a group, but they are usually quite different from the group as a whole. While working in the Middle East, I had numerous experiences of incredibly gracious host behavior on the parts of my coworkers. At the end of each workday, I repeatedly received invitations from my colleagues to come to dinner, take a tour of the town, or visit an interesting location nearby. The extent of the friendliness I experienced was initially welcomed but eventually became somewhat jarring. It was as though I was imposing, even though I felt like I was repeatedly being asked to impose. Finally, after numerous dinners and sightseeing excursions with the local staff, I asked why the proverbial red carpet was always being unfolded for me. A colleague replied that their culture requires such invitations be extended, but that *it is often hoped that they might be declined*. The seemingly transparent cultural code actually masked individual values and tendencies inconsistent with that code.

Complicating things further is the overwhelming evidence that suggests cultures frequently manifest seemingly paradoxical values and behaviors. Iran, for example, is typically considered a masculine culture; however Tehran has a number of women serving in significant political positions. Smelser (1992) argues that other such contradictions exist in every culture and gives the examples of the Anglo proverb “look before you leap” existing alongside the competing proverb “he who hesitates is lost.” Additionally, U.S. negotiators frequently complain that Chinese negotiators are both too sincere *and* simultaneously deceptive (Fang 1999). In America, we argue that “squeaky wheels get the grease” and in the same breath might suggest that one needs to “speak softly and carry a big stick.” Considering the fuzzy, inconsistent, and contradictory conceptualization of culture, Wallerstein (1990) states that he is “skeptical that we can operationalize the concept of culture . . . in any way that enables us to use it for statements that are more than trivial (34).” Like putting an ocean in a teacup, defining culture in convenient categories carries with it a dimension of impracticality.

Acknowledging these facts is necessary for any practitioner or researcher seeking to understand the concept of cultural difference. At the same time, however, we intuitively and empirically know that culture exists.

We know that the differences are real. We know what is effective for a workforce in one country may be despised if implemented in another. Navigating that paradox to glean useful data is difficult but undoubtedly necessary. Fortunately, a number of researchers have made strong headway in making the discussion of cultural difference useful without overreach.

As an anecdote, prominent cultural researcher Geert Hofstede routinely used to begin the courses he taught by writing the provocative statement on the blackboard: *CULTURE DOES NOT EXIST*. Upon clarification, he explained to the class that culture, like values, ethics, and morals, are constructs. Once they no longer have utility in explaining or predicting behavior, they need to be discarded. Culture, according to Hofstede, should never be the summative explanation of an event (2005). Culture can play a role both in cause and effect. While important for study, culture should never be construed as a “divining rod” capable of showing the truths of a society and the actions of an individual. Like Kenny Rogers’s classic song “The Gambler,” culture may require a person to both “know when to hold ’em” *and* “know when to fold ’em.” Despite such paradoxes, understanding cultural difference is not an attempt to enter into this chicken/egg debate. For our purposes, we only seek to define the *is* rather than the *should be* dimension of culture.

Hofstede (2005) summarizes the criticism against defining cultural difference and offers a succinct reply. Instead of seeking to explain individuals or cultures, we need to view difference as an initial orientation to divergent cultural values. We need to seek balance and multiple perspectives to guard against making unsupported assumptions; an open exploration of the beliefs and values of individuals must be a part of any exploration.

So we can’t ignore cultural differences. But we also have to be very careful about making assumptions. To simply state that an employee from *X* country and will likely have *Y* values is a gross (and potentially offensive and useless) oversimplification. To ignore cultural difference, though, would also overlook important aspects of culture that may play a role in productivity, job engagement, organizational identification, and commitment. Thus, there is a need for a middle ground that incorporates grounded and useful research while acknowledging the reality that individuals are unique. My focus is on working within that middle ground. With that in mind, there are number of validated cultural differences that are useful for understanding the distinctions

between various international workforces. For purposes of clarity, these distinctions will be presented on continuums. The poles of these continuums represent competing conceptual viewpoints of different cultures. It should be noted that no culture occupies either of these poles, but, rather, some portion of the space between. Learning a culture's location on these continuums can be quite instructive in understanding difference.

One such difference is flexibility. Some cultures are quite comfortable with change and adaptable to new things. Other cultures, however, value consistency and tradition. All modern workplaces have to adapt to a changing environment. As previously noted, change in one part of our interconnected world now has nearly immediate implications for everyone. The reaction to and construction of those changes, however, will necessarily be different across cultures. In highly flexible cultures, reduced anxiety to change may make it more easily embraced and even celebrated. In cultures valuing consistency, change may need to be constructed as compatible with past practices and existing values.

Consider how different cultures might interpret the following scenario:

For months, workers at your Israeli office have complained about their office computer network. They have regularly alerted you to its inefficiency, frequent crashes, and long down times for network maintenance. After working with your IT staff, soliciting bids from vendors, and performing user tests at your home office, you have finally found a new system that will remedy the problems of the Israeli staff. Employees in Israel will have to learn a new system, but it would seem to be a small price to pay for solving so many of their existing concerns. Two months after installing the new system, however, you learn of widespread dissatisfaction with it among the Israeli employees. To your shock, you find out that many of the staff actually want to return to the previous network they had so thoroughly criticized.

Such a scenario is all too real in a culture that is aversive to change. Research has consistently shown that countries such as Israel, Greece, Portugal, Belgium, and others often have this tendency (Freitag and Stokes 2009). While words such as “change,” “new and improved,” and “progress,” are viewed as self-evidently good in some parts of the world, the uncertainty created by these concepts may cause discomfort in others. In this scenario, an American office manager might see the Israeli staff as lazy or ungrateful. The Israeli employees may view such wholesale change as unwelcomed, poorly thought out, and disrespectful.

Related to flexibility is the tolerance for dissent. In some cultures, dissent is valued and consensus may be feared. In others, however, dissent may be viewed as unwelcomed and contradictory to the cultural preference for group harmony. A popularly discussed Japanese saying, for example, states “the nail that sticks up is hammered down.” In contrast, Americans hold that “if you can’t stand the heat, get out of the kitchen,” suggesting that standing strong in the face of widespread opposition demonstrates character. The intolerance of dissent in some cultures was found to be even more intense when the criticism came from channels outside of group structure. Yet even in cultures where harmony is valued over diverse and conflicting opinions, dissent is unavoidable and frequently necessary. As Ariyanto, Hornsey, and Gallois (2006) argue:

Although criticism of one’s group can be inherently threatening, a lack of internal criticism can be disastrous in terms of leading to rigid and dysfunctional decision-making, and allowing sub-optimal aspects of a group’s culture to survive . . . So, group-directed criticism is a unique form of group threat, tinged as it is with the promise of growth and positive change (100).

Take, for example, the following scenario:

After reaching agreement with a Saudi official, you feel quite pleased with yourself. To celebrate the partnership, you attend a special meeting with all the members of his delegation. An older member of the delegation speaks up at the meeting saying he has big doubts about the agreement and questions the wisdom of the deal. To your horror, the official with whom you negotiated is now nodding in apparent agreement with what the older official is saying.

The initial reaction one might have in this situation is to view the existing agreement as lost. With a little cultural investigation, however, the situation may not be as grim as previously thought. Arabic culture tends to put a premium on consensus with the values of the group. The nodding of the official you’ve worked with may not mean what you think it means. It could well only be the deference he’s required to show another member of his group, particularly a senior member of that group’s hierarchy.

Such adherence to tradition and privileging of group loyalty is often linked to a culture’s hierarchy and the distance between those with and without power. Power distance refers to the extent to which there is unequal power distribution in a society. High power distance societies see this unequal distribution of power as natural and acceptable.

The unequal distribution of power, according to many in such societies, creates a defined and predictable hierarchy. High power distance implies a sharp distinction between superiors whose role is to think and subordinates whose role is to do (Miles 1975). From this, there is order and accountability at each stratum that ensures protection of the whole.

Take, for example, this scenario from Craig Storti's *The Art of Crossing Cultures* (2002):

You are in charge of your country's operations in Singapore. You have an extremely well qualified deputy, but he seems reluctant to make even the most routine decisions. He insists on checking with you for validation of every action. This is time consuming and irritating.

While time-consuming and irritating to you, seeking validation from an authority may make complete sense to the deputy. The need to ensure that someone above in the hierarchy offers approval for the actions of someone below is, in the view of a high power distance culture, necessary for the system to function in an orderly and predictable way. In contrast, concepts like "initiative" and being a "self-starter" are privileged in low power distance cultures.

Low power distance societies work to reduce inequality and see the uneven distribution of power as indicative of injustice. Despite this cultural preference, hierarchy persists in low power distance cultures, although those in power attempt to conceal or redistribute their status; in other words, "Without all the team's hard work, I could have never won this award." This is part of a general discomfort found in low power distance cultures with status and power (Triandis 1995).

Beyond status differences, a generalized sense of "otherness" between power levels has been found in high power distance cultures. Differences between superiors and subordinates are viewed as distinct. That is to say, those with power view those without power as being "not like us." In low power distance cultures, there is a view that people are essentially the same (at least in terms of rights and responsibilities) at all levels of an organization. This notion of shared responsibility in low power distance cultures creates an interesting relationship. It is possible in high power distance cultures that people will ostensibly support the leadership role of those with power but have little investment in the policies advocated by the powerful, outside of respecting their status. Thus, it would be a mistake to view the acceptance of hierarchy as an engagement in policies emerging from that hierarchy. The old joke from workers in the Soviet

Union was that “we pretend to work and they pretend to pay us.” The orientation suggests a far more complex relationship in the very conception of power across cultures.

From a leadership perspective, Hofstede identified connections between power distance and the process of an organization making a decision. Not surprisingly, low power distance decision making tends to be more democratic and participatory with leaders serving as facilitators for a group buy-in. High power distance cultures expect unilateral (perhaps paternalistic) decisions to come from superiors. Delegation is shown to be avoided in high power distance cultures (Sagie and Koslowsky 2000), with great acceptance of autocratic leadership. Thus, decisions coming from high power distance cultures are defined as “directive decisions,” whereas decisions coming from low power distance cultures are defined as “participative decisions.” Sagie and Aycan (2003) sum up the decision-making differences between low and high power distance cultures by stating:

By contrast, in low power distant cultures, everyone is perceived to have the potential to contribute to the decision-making process; in fact, interdependence between the superior and the subordinate(s) is valued. Second, in high power distant cultures, decision-making is perceived as a privilege of management, and participation is considered as an infringement to management prerogatives. In contrast, in low power distant cultures, everyone is assumed to have equal rights. As such, employees consider it their right to participate in decisions that concern them. Finally, in high power distant cultures, the “inequality” belief creates not only dependency of subordinates in their superiors, but also fear of punishment if employees question, challenge, or disagree with their management’s decisions. This fear is much smaller in the low power distant cultures; in fact, participation here is frequently encouraged and may even be rewarded (453).

Consider the following scenario:

You are a director for a technology company and currently based in a country where hierarchy and status are highly valued. A bug in the software used by the team you supervise threatens to delay production. A fix has been developed, but you will need the full work of your team to implement it. After an extended meeting with the team, everyone assures you that they have a complete understanding of what this project entails. Upon returning the next day, you discover that no progress has been made on the fix and the team didn’t actually understand the project.

The knee-jerk reaction of many expatriates in this situation might be to accuse the team of laziness, incompetence, or even sabotage. While developing a greater understanding of the values of a culture doesn't preclude those possibilities, it certainly is worth considering that something else is going on. It is quite possible that the team felt bound to avoid saying no to a superior.

Even with relative cultural homogeneity, such as in this case, there will be challenges. However, when there is a multicultural organization where coworkers have different perceptions of the appropriate power distance, there can be unique difficulties. In a French organization with both low power distance cultures and high power distance cultures present, Gouttefarde (1996) interviewed a number of employees about their perceptions. An individual in the low power distance camp comments about his high power distance French organization by stating:

The decision-making process is so hierarchical . . . Here everything is so boxed I can just do a few things . . . carry out my defined responsibility and then pass the project on. No one is individually responsible. Your project could die in the next person's hands (62).

Another low power distance employee enthusiastically described the efforts of his home office's American CEO. The CEO's activities included "lunching with people much lower on the corporate totem pole, in order to communicate better with his staff . . . in contrast, (his new French manager) had lost visibility since becoming a member of the upper echelons" (Gouttefarde 1996, 62). Even something as simple as the setup of a manager's office carries with it cultural connotations. The placement of desks and the height differences in chairs were all found to reflect different cultural perceptions of status.

Kirkman, Gibson, and Shapiro (2001) identified examples of this phenomenon during investigations of several organizations operating in high power distance countries. In each country surveyed, new positions were created that called for creative, self-governing employee teams without a "leader" as defined by custom and tradition. Employees in these organizations "recalled feeling baffled when it was first explained to them that they would be making decisions more autonomously in a new work system" (19). Even after the teams were created and implemented, team members expressed discomfort with self-governance tasks such as giving performance feedback to peers and assessing work processes. Not surprisingly, a greater level of comfort was expressed toward an organizational structure

in which a defined leader oversees such tasks. This may even suggest a relationship between power and a culture's acceptance of determinism. In high power distance cultures, a belief persists that a larger authority, entity, or force controls both human and organizational outcomes. An example of this can be found in the largely high power distance worldview of many Muslim countries. Instead of making a statement about what will happen, the caveat of *inshallah* (God-willing) is given. This suggests a belief that human action is not intrinsically autonomous and that more powerful outside forces will ultimately bear on any plan. Thus, autonomous, egalitarian organizational structures are not only at odds with tradition; they may be viewed as an affront to it.

The potential for clash in cultural values that are so intrinsic is explored in Hoon Nam and Wie Han's (2005) analysis of an international corporate merger over cultural lines. Specifically, their work explored a merger between a Canadian and Korean firm. Their research extensively analyzed the challenges faced by Canadian expatriate managers, characterized by their emphasis on individualism and equality, and their Korean employees, characterized by a collective view and a want for strong leadership. The new organizational vision was to transition from "control and command" to "lead and support," and the results, not surprisingly, were mixed. One Canadian manager stated, "The Korean employees could not 'get out of their boxes,' because they were so used to being told how to do things [by] their managers" (42). Many senior level employees in Korea could not adapt to a new organizational orientation that held leadership as a reciprocal process between people rather than a hierarchical structure of power and responsibility. Younger employees expressed some enthusiasm for the opportunity afforded by a less hierarchical structure, but there was still a lack of trust in the new concepts. Ultimately, positive outcomes in organizational communication followed the merger, however there were growing pains created by such fundamental cultural differences.

Beyond adherence to tradition, consensus, and status, numerous other dimensions of culture can have implications for the workplace. Time conception can also differ profoundly (Freitag and Stokes 2009):

You finally made the trip to meet the new German director of a key organization. Despite slow traffic, you arrive only ten minutes late. His door is shut, so you knock on it and walk in. The chair is too far away from the desk, so you move it closer. You try to shake hands and offer a friendly "Good morning, Hans, it's nice to meet you." The reception is chilly.

While numerous faux pas permeate this example (from entering without invitation to assumed informality), the tardiness likely made all the other missteps far worse. Contrast this situation with the one that follows:

You are a sales representative seeking new clients in Latin America. An executive had expressed an interest in learning more about what your company offers. She scheduled a meeting at her office at 10:00 a.m. You arrive early, at 9:45, and wait outside. It's been over an hour and the scheduled meeting time has long since passed. It's clear to you that she is either unavailable or uninterested in the meeting. You leave to take care of other appointments. You later discover that she was disappointed you had left "early" and was wondering where you went.

Unlike the punctuality privileged by many in central Europe, other parts of the world view time as more flexible. Days are defined by tasks and relationship maintenance more so than by strict schedules. That emphasis on relationship management can also bring with it unique challenges. Consider the following:

You are a regional manager from the United States working in the Middle East. During a busy workday, you have meeting with Hussein, a client from Jordan. He begins the meeting by catching up on personal and family matters. You only have an hour for this appointment and cut off the small talk after a few minutes. Hussein leaves the meeting, and you have received a disturbing email that the contract with his company may not be renewed.

The need to maintain strong relationships often is reflective of a more collective or communal culture. Many Western cultures privilege individual achievement and embrace an ethos of personal responsibility, in contrast to collectivist cultures. Collectivism, in this context, has no overt political meaning or implication. Hofstede directly argues collective and individual dimensions of culture are not inherently linked to any political or institutional motivation. He states "The word collectivism in this sense has no political meaning: it refers to the group, not to the state" (Hofstede 2013). In broad terms, collective cultures emphasize group loyalty, protection, and commitment as antecedents to individual needs and identity. Consider this potential culture clash:

You have an organization plan for work being done in an Eastern European office. Each employee has specific tasks to be done for the team to be effective.

Unfortunately, people in your office regularly drop their own tasks to assist other employees who are having difficulty with theirs. This is an irritation as it is complicating logistics and decreasing employee accountability for work.

The tension between one culture's need for group collaboration and another culture's need for individual accountability becomes clear. The solution in a scenario like this will likely not come easily. Anyone who says differently is selling something (to paraphrase William Goldman's *The Princess Bride*). So why include these scenarios for which there is no immediate answer? Why show so many sites of culture clash in the workplace when culture is so ingrained in human thought?

Quite simply, it's not possible to investigate the challenge of working for Americans without understanding the basis of many of their perceptions. This chapter is, by no means intended to be a complete inventory of cultural difference. Such an enterprise would be both impossible and unhelpful to the purpose of our exploration. Instead, this represents an attempt at seeing how the world is filled with differing viewpoints on power, change, structure, tradition, and relationships. American values, attitudes, and actions are a source of endless confusion for non-Americans. It's now important to spend time viewing American culture with outside eyes.

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CHAPTER 3

Driving in Parkways: Parking in Driveways

As discussed in the previous chapters, all cultures are a curious mix of contradictions. Unpacking the contradictions that make up American culture, however, has proved particularly challenging for those outside of it. Stephanie Faul's *Xenophobe's Guide to the Americans* (1999) begins by identifying one such source of confusion:

Visitors may be overwhelmed by the sheer exuberant friendliness of Americans, especially in the central and southern parts of the country. Sit next to an American on an airplane and he will immediately address you by your first name, ask "So—how do you like it in the States?", explain his recent divorce in intimate detail, invite you home for dinner, offer to lend you money, and wrap you in a warm hug on parting. This does not necessarily mean he will remember your name the next day (5).

Throughout much of the world, the use of the term "friend" carries with it a connotation of shared experience, earned trust, tested loyalty, and relationship duration. While generalizing is problematic (as noted in the previous section of this book), the term "friend" is used far less discriminately in the United States. Friendship and friendliness are given more easily by Americans than by much of the rest of the world. For non-Americans, however, the appearance of friendship without a corresponding level of intimacy and commitment can appear, at best, inauthentic. At worst, it can seem insulting and deceitful.

This tendency manifests itself in the workplace in ways particularly curious to non-Americans. The term "work friend" is common to the American vocabulary. For those not acculturated to the concept, it suggests a level of informality to the workplace. Linguistically, a job is no

longer a place where one goes to earn money. It's a place where "friends" spend time together. Contrast this with much of the world where terms like "colleague" and "coworker" are used to define workplace relationships. With casual Fridays (or casual Monday through Friday, in many cases) and the marketing of companies as being "fun places to work at," work is increasingly constructed as play.

Play, on the other hand, is frequently constructed as work. In most countries, children learn sports by informally playing games with friends without adult supervision. In the United States, however, kids as young as three are organized into teams and leagues with rigorous training programs. Many people in the world spontaneously go on bike rides, while Americans have spinning classes. People of the world enjoy taking walks. Americans stuff golf in the middle.

Yet the play/work juxtaposition is hardly alone as a source of confusion about American culture. Even the simple greeting, "How are you?" is frequently misunderstood. I've worked in numerous international workplaces, and this is one of the items most frequently referenced by non-Americans. I've heard numerous stories of people being asked what they thought was a legitimate question. They respond honestly, sharing their thoughts, concerns, interests, and experiences . . . only to have the American walk away without taking the time to listen to their answer. "How are you?" is clearly a conversational ritual understood well by those who have become accustomed to American culture. For those lacking that understanding, though, it appears to be something else: a reflection of a cultural tendency toward superficiality and false faces. In contrast, I once met an American who worked abroad who had the opposite reaction. He explained he was tired of non-Americans responding to the question "by giving their whole life story" or "talking about their cat or something."

The cultural tendencies of Americans transcend interpersonal interactions and workplace collegiality. Another value that can confuse non-Americans is the premium placed on choice. For many Americans, the ability to decide between many different options is the basis of freedom (another core American value). This tendency plays out most transparently in the supermarket, specifically the cereal aisle. Having worked with many international students at universities throughout the United States, there is a narrative that is repeated with surprising regularity. The American cereal aisle is frightening. One international student told me the following:

In my country, we have ten or maybe fifteen cereal choices. We were excited when we got Frosted Flakes. Here, there seems like a thousand different kinds. And every kind has a chocolate, strawberry, blueberry, cookie crunch, yogurt, honey nut, all-natural, and fitness option. And then there are the store brand versions of all those in the big bags. I think I was stuck in the cereal aisle for about half an hour on my first trip to the supermarket.

What is interesting to note about all these different varieties of cereal is that, despite their branding difference, the ingredients show them all to be remarkably similar in content. This creation of the appearance of a wide variety of choice operating within a system that limits choice again reinforces the outside perception of a false face in the American character. And when the “lots of choices” mindset is introduced to an international workplace, the results can be similar to the experience of the international student in the supermarket. Certain cultures view decisions as stressful and potentially dangerous (Freitag and Stokes 2009). For many people in such cultures, one of the great benefits of not being in a leadership position is that one is not burdened with the responsibility of decision making. The American workplace, however, has embraced the concept of empowerment. While the term is used so frequently that its meaning has become somewhat obscured, empowerment is a logical extension of American individualism and a belief in freedom and choice. Make each person his or her own boss, as the idea goes, and people will have a greater sense of autonomy and investment in their jobs. Unfortunately, when this model is exported, it ignores the fact that many people in the world have no desire to be anyone’s boss, let alone their own.

Forcing the American value of self-reliance on cultures that want guidance can have a number of undesirable outcomes. In a number of countries, authority is viewed through a familial metaphor. A leader or supervisor is expected to give guidance, protection, nurturance, and care to the employees, while subordinates are expected to give trust, loyalty, deference, and appreciation (Aycan et al. 2000). Far from the more brutal connotations Americans might associate with autocratic power, many places in the world view power as a protective rather than coercive force. In a father/child view of organizational power, it is expected that the “father” knows what’s best for his “family,” and trust in his decisions is at the heart of the organizational structure. Telling in this metaphor is the affection often shown to autocratic leaders who loudly profess to only being interested in taking care of “their people.” In contrast, the American

view of the self-reliant employee is consistent with the highly individualistic ethos of pulling up yourself by your own bootstraps. Protection for many Americans is not seen as coming from an authority; safety and prosperity are your own responsibilities. The U.S. Declaration of Independence makes happiness the pursuit of the individual. U.S. citizens use gun ownership to ensure personal protection. Smokey the Bear says, “Only YOU can prevent forest fires.” This American ideal suggests a belief that, at home or at work, you really are on your own.

The American view of self-reliance as the source of motivation is certainly not universal and is frequently problematic when exported. I had the opportunity to work on a consultation with Russian employees of an American organization. The Russian members of the staff were facing a number of challenges, and we were searching for ways to increase efficiency and improve internal communication. Unfortunately, I approached the consultation from a largely American perspective of individual autonomy and shared decision making. Upon my first meeting with the staff, I said that I wasn’t interested in forcing recommendations on the group. What I wanted was to start by sharing and hearing thoughts from everyone on the ways the organization could improve. I waited to hear their thoughts, and the proverbial crickets chirped for several minutes. Finally, a senior member of the staff broke the silence and quite directly asked, “If you aren’t here to tell us what to do, why are you here?” The question was jarring, but ultimately predictable. On a range of metrics, Russian culture generally takes a dim view of individualism, collaboration, and shared power (Hofstede and Hofstede 2005).

Beyond being off-putting to many cultures with a different conception of authority and power, the American emphasis on individual autonomy can often appear hypocritical in less hierarchical societies. Much like the illusion of choice in the cereal aisle, American “freedom” frequently masks a number of hidden restraints. One dimension of American workplace culture that is frequently confusing to non-Americans is the extensive list of rules and policies that employees are expected to follow. For an American, such a list is not at all at odds with the cultural context. After all, the United States requires an extensive list of rules for even the most obvious circumstances. For example:

- On a Sears hairdryer: Do not use while sleeping.
- On a bag of Fritos: You could be a winner! No purchase necessary. Details inside.

- On a bar of Dial soap: Directions: Use like regular soap.
- On a Swanson's frozen dinner: Serving suggestion: Defrost.
- On a hotel provided shower cap in a box: Fits one head.
- On Nytol sleep aid: Warning: May cause drowsiness.
- On an American Airlines packet of nuts: Instructions: Open packet, eat nuts.
- On a child's Superman costume: Wearing of this garment does not enable you to fly.

While many of these were created because of concerns about litigiousness, the fact that failing to codify the obvious can result in a lawsuit speaks volumes about the importance of rules to Americans. And from personal experience, this duality of freedom and constraint can endlessly confound those unfamiliar with American culture. For example, I once greeted several friends from overseas at a local restaurant in the United States. It was early afternoon, and the restaurant was otherwise empty. When a few more friends arrived, we pulled up an extra chair to accommodate everyone. Moments later, the manager appeared at our table and informed us that we needed to return the chair to its previous location. When we asked why this was necessary in an empty restaurant, we were informed that “the chair now occupies a portion of the fire lane and I’m going to have to ask you to return it.” We said we were comfortable with this mortal threat. We indicated that we would be willing to jump out of the window if fire spontaneously erupted. Whatever was needed. But it was to no avail, and we ultimately had to move. After the incident, one of my international guests asked, “America . . . land of the free, huh?”

Henry Ford famously marketed the Model T as being “available in any color so long as it is black.” When the Super Soaker high powered water gun injured several children playing with it, regulations to ban the squirt pistol were proposed. During the same period, no such law regulating firearm ownership passed (Faul 1999). Polite dinner conversation in America should steer clear of religion, politics, and sex, to which much of the world may respond, “What else is there to talk about?” (The weather, obviously). The contradiction of marketing a culture of freedom with the reality of a profoundly constrained culture produces much tension to the uninitiated, especially in the workplace. Indeed, the America perceived by non-Americans suggests a façade hiding something insidious.

The source of those insidious perceptions are inextricably linked to the anti-Americanism that exists worldwide. As Sardar and Davies (2002)

argue, the resentment held by the world toward the United States is salient in most populations. Noting how widely held this attitude is, Katzenstein and Keohane (2006) summarize the world's position by stating:

When its Belgrade embassy is bombed, Chinese people believe it was a deliberate act of the United States government; terror plots by native British subjects are viewed as reflecting British support for American policy; when AIDS devastates much of Africa, the United States is faulted for not doing enough to stop it (25).

While unsurprisingly more intense in some locations, the attitude that the policies of the United States are not good for the world is held in places that would seem to be pro-American or at least benign to U.S. interests. Many Middle Eastern populations find the United States to be untrustworthy, because expressions of support for democratic reforms are seemingly contradicted by policies that include tolerance for autocratic regimes in the region (Peterson 2002). Concerns regarding trade law, subsidized agriculture, environmental standards, and the perception of a unilateral superpower contribute to a disparaging worldview for many. Even the tone of "stalwart" allies has grown increasingly acrimonious, with many European populations and governments openly suggesting that the United States is not only inappropriately using its power, but it is doing so in a way that invites dangerous outcomes for the world (Kull et al. 2009). Given the vital role of such partners in international cooperation on issues such as the global economy, the prevention of terrorism, and the creation of a climate favorable for improved environmental policies, this rift has profound implications. And research suggests that the opportunity to improve this climate is unlikely to come about so long as globalization is seen as a soft-pedaled attempt at Americanization (Katzenstein and Keohane 2006).

While the literature suggests a widely varying historical basis for anti-Americanism, contemporary analysis suggests an emerging manifestation of this attitude composed of the following elements: the discussion of America in terms of crude stereotypes, the causal attribution of malign intent and implausible (sometimes conspiratorial) omnipotence to the U.S. government, and the desire to narrow one's own society's contact with corrupting American influence (Cox 2008).

While there are certainly zealots who literally see the United States as an instrument of some sort of supernatural evil, Cox suggests that, in

the main, anti-Americanism operates from a quasi-rational, if circular, set of logical principles. Moreover, these attitudes should not be misconstrued as authentic criticism of U.S. policy. Instead, the rejection of policies emerging from the United States is not discussed on its own terms, but, rather, as an indication of a deeper and more profound cultural, intellectual, attitudinal, ethical, and spiritual poverty that has infected American society, perhaps chronically. The crude stereotypes ascribed to Americans include items such as cultural illiteracy, laziness, a lack of foresight/planning, willful ignorance, dishonesty, selfishness, arrogance, self-indulgence, hypocrisy, inattentiveness, and an unwillingness or inability to engage in dialogue with those outside of its borders.

Furthering this typology of anti-Americanism, Katzenstein and Keohane's (2007) book *Anti-Americanisms in World Politics* suggest that these stereotypes are manifested in global politics via one or more foundational worldviews, including liberal objections (the United States does not live up to its ideals); social objections (lack of social welfare, the death penalty, unilateralist policies, spotty adherence to international treaties); sovereign nationalist objections (desire to reinforce sovereignty and power of one's state); and radical anti-Americanisms (calls for the destruction or transformation of U.S. institutions). Thus, the cultural perception of Americans as "ignorant" or "selfish" becomes concrete as the United States is cast as a country that willfully or stupidly ignores the human rights violations that its policies foster while continuing to proclaim the mantra of "Land of the Free." As Katzenstein and Keohane (2006) note, anti-Americanism is more than simply opposition to what the United States *does*, but extends to opposition to what the United States *is*.

It should be noted that despite the virulence of rhetoric expressed against the United States, the interest and appreciation that many have toward American culture cannot be separated from this animosity. As Diven (2007) recalls, at a protest in the Philippines one protester carried a sign stating, "Yankee Go Home—and Take Me with You!" This perhaps exemplifies the ambivalent attitudes of some critics of the United States. It is this attitude of simultaneous aversion and attraction that could best characterize the attitude of much of the world. One could vocally criticize foundational aspects of American culture while, at the same time, pine for a Harley Davidson or Harvard professorship—or both. This could represent a unique space of personal political worldview.

If someone finds a region or country repugnant, it is almost certain that avoidance will be part of that attitude. Yet in the case of anti-Americanism,

fascination and consumption appear to exist in parallel and not exclusive to animosity and hatred. This is central to Katzenstein and Keohane's thesis that the polyvalence of American culture and policy is the foundation for world resentment. Clerics in the Middle East decry the lack of morality in a sexually explicit and hedonistic culture, while the United States has the most robust church attendance of any industrialized country. Liberals criticize the United States for having a repressive society, while the country leads much of the world in policies favoring women's emancipation and gay rights. Human rights advocates decry U.S. military and security policies, while America has played a crucial role in genocide intervention and aid to the world's poor and disenfranchised. Citizens speak against U.S. imperialism but apply for jobs when an American company opens a branch in their country. In sum, the United States simultaneously creates arguments for anti-Americanism while engaging in actions that seemingly should mitigate them.

Some might argue that this anti-American sentiment is relatively new and closely tied to political and military developments since September 11, 2001. Significant historical and cultural research, however, shows that such attitudes are not unique to the current context and are deeply rooted throughout the world. In his book *Uncouth Nation: Why Europe Dislikes America*, Andrei Markovits cites long-standing perceptions of America as an uncivilized and uncultured nation as being at the foundation of worldwide attitudes (2007).

It is similarly tempting to suggest that perceptions of the United States greatly improved after the election of Barack Obama following the unpopular presidency of George W. Bush. The world's reaction would seem to indicate as much. Obama's election created an unprecedented euphoria in international reaction to a U.S. presidential election. As a person of African heritage, a child of an immigrant, and a product of a single mother with working-class roots, the mythos of Obama was framed as a validation of the American values of tolerance, opportunity, and equality. His Harvard education and editorial position on the *Harvard Law Review* spoke against perceptions of the United States as a nation that embraces an anti-intellectual view of its leaders and policies. *The Times* of London indexed reaction in the world press and found significant international enthusiasm for an Obama presidency (Burgess and Booth 2008). The Spanish national daily *El País* proclaimed that Obama's victory was a chance to turn the page after a presidency characterized

by “eight years of incompetence and abuses” (Burgess and Booth 2008). Germany’s *Bild-Zeitung* stated, “Barack Obama has won more than just the U.S. presidential election: he has won the hearts . . .” (Burgess and Booth 2008). The Syrian daily *Ath Thawra* suggested that a historic change could allow America to re-engage on policies related to social justice throughout the world. The *Egyptian Gazette* ran the headline “World Hopes for a ‘Less Arrogant’ America” (Burgess and Booth 2008). The Austrian national newspaper *Die Kronen Zeitung* proclaimed that Obama would be a reconciler for America’s ills (*Die Kronen Zeitung* 2008). This reconciliation would result in his ending American wars in the Middle East, solving the world economic downturn, providing national health-care for all Americans, increasing environmental standards, providing aid and support to developing countries, and healing America’s racial divide (perhaps breaking for lunch after that). In sum, the consistent message of much of the world was that Obama was some sort of transformational remedy to the American identity created under George W. Bush.

The reality, however, has proven far more complicated than that. The initial optimism that Obama could serve as remedy to the stereotypes and objections many have toward the United States has proven to be a slippery proposition. Despite the initially positive perceptions, the overall opinion of the United States has fluctuated little from previous perceptions during the Bush administration. In a survey conducted by the World Public Opinion Organization, the United States continues to receive sharp criticism for coercing other nations with its superior power (15 of 19 nations), failing to abide by international law (17 of 19 nations), and for the perceived abuse of its position in the world (20 of 22 nations) (Kull et al. 2009).

Initial programs proposed by Obama have produced results inconsistent with the stratospheric level of expectation his election seemed to promise. In terms of Obama’s worldwide reputation, the promise of immediate closure of the Guantanamo facility was unfeasible, U.S. involvement in international conflicts continued, and the recovery of the international economy remains shaky. Perhaps most damaging to international perception has been the leaks related to the surveillance programs of the National Security Agency in 2013. The administration’s approval of accessing the Internet and telephone records of millions of people confirmed many of the world’s dark suspicions about the U.S. character. Ronald Deibert, a Canadian professor and author of *Black Code: Inside*

the Battle for Cyberspace, writes that America's commitment to freedom is "one that doesn't include us 'foreigners' [who] now make up the vast majority of the Internet users. Americans would do well to consider the international implications of their domestic policies before they come home to bite them" (2013). Indeed, the initial redemptive power of Obama for improving world perception of the United States has waned, replaced with many of the existing narratives of disengaged hypocrisy and superficiality.

This leaves us with an important question: Why does all this matter? It matters because there are elements of American culture that are not understood by the world. It matters because negative perception of the United States can lead to confirmation bias on the part of those who interact with Americans and American organizations. Extensive research over the last 50 years has shown that people tend to base judgments on existing perceptions more than the evidence at hand. If one believes Americans to be superficial and untrustworthy, one will project those tendencies onto the observed behaviors of Americans. If an American organization enacts policies that are inconsistent with local culture, it's hardly surprising that the local culture may view the organization as imperialistic. In sum, America's complicated cultural code and the world's perception of American intent all play a role in the attitudes of non-American workforces.

So why is the reaction of the world to American workplace culture not more thoroughly investigated? Stephanie Faul (1999) offers a response that, while pithy, has a kernel of truth worth considering:

Like every other nation, America knows that it's the best country in the world. The difference is that Americans have proof: people from all over the globe make enormous sacrifices to come to the United States, often risking their lives in the process. What more evidence is needed? What is more, Americans believe themselves to be the only nation that is truly capable of winning . . . Having God on your side in a fight is good. Having the United States on your side is better. To an American, they're the same thing (8–9).

While Faul's language elevates generalization and stereotyping for entertainment value, the hubris of ignoring the world's perspective on American culture is folly. Viewing a world filled with American music, American food, American movies, American brands, and American slang presents an intoxicating *Americanus universalis* that makes cultural understanding an interesting but ultimately unnecessary endeavor. Add to this the

elements of size and isolation that make up American geography and that view of the world narrows further.

Excellent academic scholarship exists that explores how the American worldview might prove challenging for non-Americans. Unfortunately, American knowledge of cultural interaction too often deals in routine behaviors and trivialities—How do they shake hands in x country? What side of the road do they drive on? Does belching at the dinner table mean they liked the meal? Why do they slurp their noodles? How does the bathroom work? Why do they like David Hasselhoff so much? and so on. While performances and artifacts are important, they come from a perspective. To understand a variety of perspectives on the American workplace, it was crucial for this research to get the thoughts of non-Americans. The process by which those thoughts were gathered and reported is the focus of the next section of this book.

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CHAPTER 4

Strangers in a Strange Land

To get a firsthand look at how an international workforce manages the American cultural environment, I surveyed nearly 600 foreign service nationals working in the U.S. State Department. Foreign service nationals are non-American, locally hired employees at American diplomatic and consular posts. They occupy a unique organizational position as liaisons between American staff and host nations and are invaluable in ensuring that American diplomatic posts are functional. They comprise the bulk of the 42,000 locally employed staff members working at more than 250 U.S. embassies and consulates worldwide and are frequently considered the glue that holds embassies together (U.S. State Department 2007).

Foreign service nationals (FSNs) account for 32 percent of the positions at U.S. State Department international posts. At the State Department, FSNs provide logistical bridges between the embassy and the host country, because many officers lack the cultural and linguistic skills to function in the country in which they are posted (Asthana 2006). The effectiveness of FSNs in providing this support, consequently, accounts for the ability of the U.S. State Department to conduct foreign policy and diplomatic operations. Foreign service nationals clearly provide a vital function within the organization, yet there are important components of their organizational status that make them a unique population that is ideal for study in investigating international attitudes toward American work structures.

The designation of FSN is still used in many State Department documents and by foreign service officers. Throughout the late 1990s and early 2000s, different names have been given to the FSN position to minimize the “foreign” aspect of the job title. Some changes have included calling people in this position “locally engaged staff,” or LES (producing an

unfortunate acronym that phonetically sounds like “less”) and “LE staff.” As of 2007, the State Department itself used a variety of terms such as these along with the FSN moniker ubiquitously in their documentation (U.S. State Department 2007). Despite these changes, the FSN designation is still operationally used by State Department officers and locally hired employees themselves. For purposes of clarity and to be consistent with the language generally used by the State Department, FSN will be the term that is used here.

The role of foreign service nationals is that of support for organizational decisions made almost exclusively by Americans. Due to heightened fears related to terrorism, the State Department has also increased oversight of FSN work activity. For instance, the monitoring of work has been increased along with a reduction in the decision-making power of FSNs. The access to sensitive information has been more intensively scrutinized, and the screening FSNs face when entering a facility has become more rigorous, decreasing the work flexibility and office access for FSNs. Cumulatively, the role of the FSN is clearly differentiated from the role of foreign service officers in terms of their operational and security status. The recruitment website emphasizes the importance of FSN roles but furthers this differentiation by stating, “(FSNs) provide unique services in support of foreign policy at nearly 265 posts worldwide. They are an integral part of the team dedicated to representing America’s interests to other countries” (U.S. State Department 2013). Furthering this important-but-other status, the website goes on to indicate the following:

(FSN’s) are the continuity staff of our Missions abroad. Our Locally Employed Staff (FSN’s) abroad provide the institutional knowledge and professional contacts that are so important to the embassy. LE Staff perform vital mission program and support functions. All USG agencies under Chief of Mission authority depend heavily on their continuity staff, frequently delegating to them significant management roles and program functions.

The status of foreign service nationals in the U.S. State Department clearly identifies their foundational role. Correspondingly, the structure of the State Department precludes advancement of FSNs to the level of State Department Officers. The role of FSNs is to implement initiatives created by Americans within the State Department, not create the policy of the U.S. State Department. Despite their separate status, FSNs receive

consideration and work protection that is consistent with the protection available for U.S. workers:

It is the policy of the Department of State to provide equal opportunity and equitable treatment in employment to all persons without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, handicap, political affiliation, marital status, or sexual orientation (U.S. State Department 2013).

Salary and benefits, however, are derived from the prevailing practices of the host country:

Section 408 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980 prescribes the basis for setting Locally Employed Staff compensation and benefits. To the extent that it is consistent with the U.S. public interest, U.S. missions compensate Locally Employed Staff based upon prevailing practice in country. This means that total compensation (salary and benefits such as health insurance, life insurance, and allowances) is based upon what local comparable employers are providing to their employees in jobs that have similar levels of complexity and responsibility. As a result, Locally Employed Staff should normally receive a package of pay and benefits competitive with that paid by other employers. Locally Employed Staff are paid in host country currency unless local prevailing practice is to compensate all LE Staff in US dollars (U.S. State Department 2013).

The physical space of an embassy or consulate is also in a unique territory. While present in the host nation, they are, in principle, not governed by the legal rules and prevailing practices of that nation. Additionally, the stated mission of the U.S. State Department is that its diplomatic and consular posts should reflect American values, standards, and practices. Within the space of a U.S. post, English is the dominant language. Communication with those visiting or receiving services is expected to be consistent with American practices. According to the State Department, the relationship between supervisors and employees (in many cases, FSNs) should meet American standards of collegiality and professionalism. Regardless of the standards of the host country, the policies and procedures inside an American diplomatic or consular post operate independently from the territory and should, in theory, be based on the values, standards, and regulations derived from the United States employment and legal rules. The space of the embassy or consulate is functionally a U.S. space regardless of the country it is operating in. When an

FSN arrives for work at a State Department post, they are, at least in operational terms, working in America. In sum, FSNs serve an important position in serving U.S. foreign policy. They also, however, exist in a divergent position where the State Department both depends on their status as non-Americans, and requires that their work practices reflect those of an American institution.

All of this is a fairly roundabout way of explaining why I chose the FSNs to gain an understanding of the experiences of non-Americans in the American workplace. First of all, the State Department *mandates* that the work environment is American. An overseas office of Google or Nike may retain some American character, but it likely has had a level of localization. Not so with the State Department. You have an almost perfectly controlled dose of American workplace culture delivered to non-Americans.

Some might argue that FSNs have chosen to work for United States, compromising their ability to be representatives of the communities in which they operate. I actually see this as source of strength for this research. Their decision to work for the State Department indicates interest and enthusiasm in being a part of the American workplace. Their qualification for these positions also suggests developed English language skills, educational attainment, and professional experience useful for the State Department. Basically, these are the precise sorts of people that any American company or organization would recruit when opening an office overseas. Their views on American workplace culture similarly deserve greater consideration. All of this is made even more salient when one considers the importance of work in which FSNs engage.

As members of the community in which U.S. diplomatic posts are located, FSNs have unique access to the local population. A small sample of the potential door-opening function offered by FSNs include:

- Access to the local media
- Links to educational programs in the community
- Understanding of how the FSN workforce will interpret U.S. directives
- Knowledge of the idiosyncrasies of local and regional governmental institutions
- Understanding the meaning and nuance of the local language
- Ability to articulate and explain local culture, cultural institutions, and cultural expectations to an American audience

This is by no means exhaustive, as there are so many potential linkages that they cannot reasonably be articulated here. Even internal State Department documentation suggests that the value potentially added by FSNs is well understood. In a statement from the State Department, the functions of FSNs are described as “performing vital foreign policy program and support functions, and providing the unique knowledge and understanding of local culture and conditions that are so important to America’s transformational diplomacy” (U.S. State Department 2007, 21). The human resources section of the State Department goes on to state:

The FSN community is integral to America’s transformational diplomacy across the globe. Over the years, in many parts of the world, U.S. embassy FSNs have helped advance the ideals and strengthen the institutions of democracy on every continent. Libraries and cultural centers in closed countries, for example, provide a refuge where readers gain free and open access to a diversity of thought and opinion. Local national staff of these centers regularly host democracy study groups and book debates, teach English and Internet-searching skills, and facilitate advanced research. FSNs work closely with clients ranging from university students to Supreme Court judges. As Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has stated: “There is no higher calling than to help other people fulfill their aspirations for a better life, a more democratic future, and a more peaceful world.” (21)

Their mission is clear—FSNs can assist the State Department in fulfilling its operational functions and be the basis of engagement with international populations. The viability of this asset, however, is contingent upon the organization effectively harnessing it. The FSN population could reject the sort of entrepreneurial autonomy required, especially if their cultural background is less focused on individualism and shared leadership. Alternatively, the staff may feel that the stratified nature of their roles in the State Department is too limiting, especially if their cultural background encourages individual advancement and dispersed decision making. FSNs, like many employees working for U.S. organizations, are profoundly important, yet their buy-in to the American workplace is not at all certain.

With their importance established, I quickly found out that there had been no academic research of this intriguing population. Fortunately, I was provided with the opportunity to investigate this group more extensively. Working in the role of a communication trainer and

consultant at diplomatic and consular posts throughout the world, I had the opportunity to make site visits to Baku, Azerbaijan; Frankfurt, Germany; Rome, Italy; Athens, Greece; Tallinn, Estonia; Sofia, Bulgaria; Beirut, Lebanon; Ankara, Turkey; Yerevan, Armenia; Pristina, Kosovo; and London, England. I also facilitated programs in unique environments including courses for Israeli and Palestinian security personnel working with the State Department in Jerusalem and collaborative exercises for the ethnically diverse staff in Kigali, Rwanda. Additionally, I was able to administer surveys to non-American State Department employees from over 70 different countries at the Regional Program Office in Vienna, Austria.

From the data I collected, I quickly found out that foreign service nationals provide an ideal population for study when seeking out the experiences of non-Americans in the American workplace. In most multinational corporations, supervision of facilities abroad is frequently given to locally hired staff. The boards of companies and organizations are often internationally diverse in terms of their composition. Organizational structures in a number of global institutions are often adapted to meet the needs of local workforces and populations. Thus, a myriad of mitigating variables would compromise any findings suggested about the feelings of non-Americans working for “American” organizations. The information I collected showed this wasn’t the case here. American structures and supervision for foreign service nationals in the State Department proved fixed, certain, and largely non-negotiable. Accountability and evaluation was exclusively tied to American staff. Workplace culture, as expected, was shown to be expressly and overtly American. With the data collected, I was granted a window into the experiences of a non-American in a wholly American environment.

The survey administered covered a range of items relevant to practitioners in numerous fields including international business and international relations. The 595 respondents were asked about their perceptions of the American workplace, their level of cultural comfort within institutional structures, their commitment level to an American organization, and their acceptance of American supervisory practices. Employees were also given the opportunity to share personal anecdotes and narratives related to their work in a uniquely American institution. The results, as previously noted, are stunning, instructive, and imminently useful. To offer some context for those results, however, it’s important to understand the structure and focus of my investigation.

Based on my experiences and themes in the previously cited literature, I found the State Department to be a hierarchical organization that purported to offer a great deal of autonomy to foreign service nationals. This is remarkably consistent with existing research about the paradoxical relationship between autonomy and control in American culture (Hofstede and Hofstede 2005). Foreign service nationals have a status below American officers within the organizational structure. With this status, the gap between the power of Americans and the power of foreign service nationals is pronounced. Despite this gap, the overt messages of the organization (like many others in the United States) tend to emphasize the value of foreign staff contributions and creativity. With all of this in mind, I was intrigued to see how FSN attitudes were affected by these competing messages. How would foreign staff coming from hierarchical cultures react to the empowerment message of the organization? Would the emphasis on individual achievement and personal growth in employment appeal to those who culturally see the world in collective terms? Would people coming from more egalitarian cultures view the masked hierarchy of the American workplace as duplicitous? These were all important items that I felt deserved investigation. More importantly, how would items such as these affect workplace commitment?

The concept of organizational commitment has become a touchstone for many investigations into organizational effectiveness. The basis for this interest is due in no small part to the perceived outcomes of organizational commitment in terms of teamwork, performance, loyalty, and job satisfaction. Despite the conceptual interest organizational commitment has generated, definitions for the concept itself are decidedly varied (Cohen 2003). The definitions are closely linked to two key theoretical approaches to the concept: the calculative versus the moral/emotional approach. The calculative approach views organizational commitment in investment terms, that is to say what investments (personal, social, economic, opportunity cost, etc.) would an employee lose if that individual were to leave an organization? Basically, this approach says that employees ask, "Is it worth staying?" and their commitment level is derived from the answer. The moral/emotional approach deals with the concept of organizational identification. Does this "feel" like a place in which I belong? The distinction between these approaches can be blurred, as identification can simultaneously be viewed as an investment. If you like your coworkers and the organization, that can also be considered in the plus column of your calculation to stay or leave.

Lyman Porter's work has been called "the most visible measure of affective commitment and has enjoyed widespread acceptance and use" (Griffin and Bateman 1986, 170). Consisting of a clear and easy-to-follow survey, Porter's survey explores multiple dimensions of commitment. These include:

- Desire to continue membership within an organization
- Acceptance of and belief in the values of an organization
- Willingness to invest effort and energy into an organization

Because all of these items are important for understanding that satisfaction, engagement, and commitment non-Americans feel in the American workplace, I adapted Porter's measure for the survey I distributed.

Subsequent research testing and re-testing of Porter's seminal 1974 survey has demonstrated its reliability and validity as well as the survey's practical quality. Cohen (2003) argues that from the 1970s onward, much of the scholarship on organizational commitment has been based on results generated from Porter's 1974 survey (or variations thereof). Recently, however, there have been some criticisms of this measure. Most deal with the fact that Porter's survey does not draw clear distinctions between the values and outcomes of an individual. For example, Porter's assessment of the "willingness to invest effort in an organization" is functionally useless without a measure of outcome based on performance. Basically, if a person lacks talent, all the investment in the world won't have much effect.

Meyer and Allen (1984, 1991) voice this need for a multidimensional concept of organizational commitment. Working with a combination of the calculative approach and Porter's work that is more focused on employee attitudes, their resulting measure examines "affective commitment" (positive feelings, identification, attachment, etc.), "continuance commitment" (the extent to which the cost of leaving an organization keeps an individual in place in an organization), and "normative commitment" (the feeling of obligation to an organization). To give the broadest approach possible in measuring the attitudes of non-Americans in the American workplace, Meyer and Allen's measure was also adapted for the survey I distributed.

Of particular interest to this research project are the outcomes of the various forms of organizational commitment. During periods of pay freezes and budget cuts, commitment could prove to be a factor in motivation that is independent from the fiscal realities. Essentially, when

money is flowing, people tend to stay happy. Commitment is important to evaluate because it's somewhat independent from the ups and downs of an organization; whether people jump ship or help out when times are tough. Mowday et al. (1982) echo this by demonstrating that the core basis for productivity in an organization is the quality of commitment in that organization. Validating this is the work of Somers (1995), who examined commitment as it relates to job withdrawal intentions, turnover, and absenteeism. In his work, commitment emerged as the most consistent predictor of these outcome variables, thus further validating the importance of commitment as a factor in measuring organizational effectiveness. In short, if we want to see the implications of workplace attitudes for non-Americans in American organizations, commitment is arguably the best starting point for examination.

While the important outcomes of commitment are obvious, there are voices of dissent that increasingly suggest that the practicality and relevance of organizational commitment are waning. In a fluid international economy, people are looking at jobs as temporary endeavors more and more, something to do until the next big thing comes along. The concept of the "employee as self-employed" has also emerged. This perspective suggests that people view work as primarily self-directed, with long-term commitment to a single institution going out of favor in an increasingly flexible economy.

Despite concerns about the applicability of commitment as a relevant measure for effective employment, there are key distinctions between American and non-American workforces that need to be considered. Especially important is the fact that many cultures outside the United States still put a premium on long-term employment at a single institution (Hoon Nam and Wie Han 2005). Rapid fluctuations in the world economy have also made sustained employment more attractive. Finally, if the rise of the entrepreneurial employee ever does become a global trend, the ability to retain staff will become even more important. For any organization, understanding and improving commitment levels on the part of employees remains a pivotal priority. The intersection between cultural satisfaction for non-Americans in American organizations undoubtedly factors into commitment levels.

Yet an important problem in answering that question remains: how do you know what a person's cultural orientation is? The simplest method would be to just ask the person about country of origin and make assumptions from there. However, that's quite problematic. Cultural

membership certainly shapes individual values, but it cannot be assumed to be the summation of an individual's values. Just because I'm from a place, it can't be assumed that I'm a representative of the place. If it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, there still is the possibility it's a rhinoceros in a well-made disguise. Individuals are often unique from their culture for a variety of reasons, including familial communication, individual personality, exposure to other cultures, personal experience, status in a culture, and membership in subcultures (Samovar 2000). In the case of non-Americans working for American institutions, many may have also lived, worked, and/or studied in the United States. Some have worked extensively for U.S. organizations and acculturated to American workplace structures. All of these factors make classifying an individual's cultural dimensions based on cultural membership unreliable.

Fortunately, Dorfman and Howell (1988) provide a survey that applies Hofstede's cultural dimensions to the individual level. Basically, it measures an individual's cultural orientation rather than assuming it based on where the person is from. Not surprisingly, the scale has shown strong correlation between cultural membership and cultural values (i.e., the responses of an individual German correspond to other Germans, the responses of an individual from China correspond to Chinese values generally, etc.). This approach, though, provides a superior framework for viewing cultural variables at the individual level. It allows us to consider culture without falling into the trap of stereotyping.

Cumulatively, all of this leads to the first important question looked at in the survey: in what ways does culture factor into commitment levels of non-Americans in an American workplace? To answer this question, different types of commitment were measured in the population. The commitment types include attitudinal commitment, affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. The possible differences in an individual's response to the various types of commitment are also worth considering. Did the non-Americans have a positive attitude about the workplace culture? Was it something they wanted to be a part of in the long term? Is culture a factor in employees wanting to stay or leave? These are the sorts of questions relevant to both the State Department and other American organizations operating outside the United States.

For many non-Americans working in American organizations, there could be the perception of a kind of glass ceiling that prevents advancement. After all, if the character of an organization is American, that presents a substantial barrier for leadership access if one comes from outside.

Again, the laboratory quality of the sample here becomes clear: FSNs are overtly precluded from organizational leadership. Such barriers can obviously negatively impact motivation. These factors could certainly inhibit long-term employment on the part of staff coming from more egalitarian cultures focused on individual achievement.

It should be noted, though, that there are potentially problematic organizational expectations present in high power distance cultures, as well. The expectation is for organizational leadership that provides guidance, protection, nurturance, and care to the employees, while subordinates are expected to give trust, loyalty, deference, and appreciation (Ayca et al. 2000). The empowerment/control paradox of American organizations could, potentially, alienate both egalitarian and hierarchical groups. Measuring their differing reactions to the American workplace and connecting those reactions to their organizational investment can prove similarly instructive.

Such surveys, correlations, and measures can only give us a portion of the story, though. To truly understand the experiences of non-Americans in a very American workplace, there has to be a space where people are free to tell their stories. As such, the survey also includes an open question that allows for a narrative response. Looking at the whole of these narrative responses, there should be several emergent stories regarding their experiences in an American organization. To better define these responses, I employed a basic conceptual analysis. Identifying emerging themes and showing sample responses from these themes offered additional insights into the written observations shared by the non-American staff. The goal of this analysis is not the creation of statistical or scientific proof and it is (per definition) highly subjective. Rather, the intent is to create several defined categories and examples of responses that may better frame the results; to give meaning to the data analyzed.

In addition to understanding the basis of the survey, it is also important to understand mechanics of its construction and distribution. The population of the study comprises 595 foreign service national respondents from multiple countries and cultures. The survey questions are written in English, a language that FSNs are fluent in as a condition of employment. There were 123 hard copies of the survey distributed at FSN training events held in the following locations:

- Rome, Italy
- Sofia, Bulgaria

- Kigali, Rwanda
- Ankara, Turkey
- Kiev, Ukraine
- FSN Training Center, Vienna, Austria

The two training events held at the FSN Training Center included FSNs from dozens of countries ranging from the Dominican Republic to Madagascar to Pakistan, greatly adding to the geographic and cultural diversity of those receiving the hard-copy version of the survey.

Online distribution of the survey was handled through a State Department FSN training and support network. This network informed FSN employees worldwide of the online survey and provided instructions on how to access it. The announcement also made clear that the survey conclusions could be shared with the State Department, but the survey and its results were not initiated by the department nor would its employees have access to individual responses. Responders from this online appeal account for the remaining 472 responses. To maintain full anonymity and because of methodological concerns about presuming a cultural orientation based on nationality, respondents were not required to identify where they were from in the survey.

The survey itself is composed of five sections: culture measures, organizational commitment measures, affective organizational commitment measures, questions about the nature and duration of employment, and an open-ended question that allows for a narrative response. Economic concerns about salary impacting survey results (i.e., well-paid people accept all aspects of their positions; poorly paid people reject all aspects of their positions) are largely mitigated by the fact that State Department salaries for FSNs are, theoretically, fixed to be equal to or higher than comparable positions elsewhere in the host country (U.S. State Department 2013).

Taken together, this information is immensely important for understanding the perceptions of non-Americans in an American workplace. To summarize, foreign service nationals are a great group to study because they work in a controlled American environment. Understanding their cultural perception of workplace structure can give us immense insight into the various perspectives of non-Americans in an American workplace. We'll then be able to look at the data and draw conclusions about how different cultural perceptions affect important items such as workplace commitment. Finally, this study will allow for non-Americans in an

American workplace to tell their stories; what they appreciate, what they detest, how they feel about U.S. workplace culture, and how they manage the cultural differences in the environment in which they work. Setting up how this analysis was conducted may lack some of the entertainment value of German Walmart greeters or the failure of the French to embrace Disneyland, but the results of this study undoubtedly have implications for both. With that in mind, the next chapter in this book will look at how culture informed the experience of an international workforce in an environment that is uncompromisingly American.

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CHAPTER 5

Working in America Abroad

As noted previously, the group looked at in this research is unique. They are non-Americans who have decided to work in a very American environment. As such, we have the unique opportunity to get the cultural perspective of a group of people inclined to such a career choice. With the population composed of diverse respondents with unique experiences from over 50 different countries, the data produced can be quite instructive. So what are the group's cultural perceptions? Several responses to the survey questions suggest interesting and surprising outcomes.

A survey item asked for agreement or disagreement with the statement, "It is frequently necessary for a manager to use authority and power when dealing with subordinates." Over half of the non-American workforce disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement, with only 25 percent indicating agreement. While speculative, these results indicate a general consistency with the perceived egalitarianism emphasized by American organizations.

The American emphasis on perceived organizational equality has been widely documented. From cultural narratives that tell the story of industrious employees going from the mailroom to the boardroom to wall-less shared office spaces, the American tendency to project equality and universal opportunity is widely known. American supervisors tend to reduce the perception that they have authority and hide any of the privileges that power may entitle (Gouttefarde 1996). From U.S. presidents trying to play up their working-class roots to politicians showing their families are just "normal folks" to celebrities helping with volunteers at homeless shelters during Christmas, there is a near universal emphasis on creating a nonhierarchical appearance as part of American culture. The organization looked at for this book, the State Department, is no different.

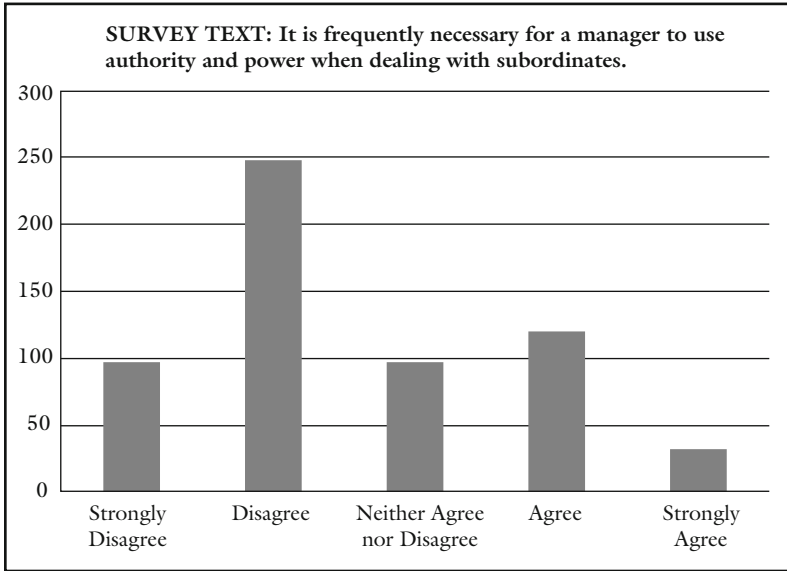


Figure 1 Necessity of using authority.

This was further exemplified in former Secretary of State Colin Powell’s initiative “One Team–One Mission,” which continues to have traction in the organization’s ethos. This important part of the American perspective clearly has purchase in the minds of people choosing to work for a U.S. institution.

Other items similarly produced informative results relating to the cultural psychology of those choosing to work for an American organization. When asked for agreement or disagreement with the statement, “Managers should seldom ask for the opinions of employees,” nearly 75 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

The American emphasis on the appearance of a collaborative work environment also appeared to be an attractive feature to non-American employees. From suggestions boxes in employee break rooms to online feedback systems checked by management, American organizations frequently emphasize that employees at all levels have an important institutional voice. The overwhelming support of this perspective on the part of respondents would appear to indicate that this is an attractive perceived feature of working for Americans. The ability to offer opinions to

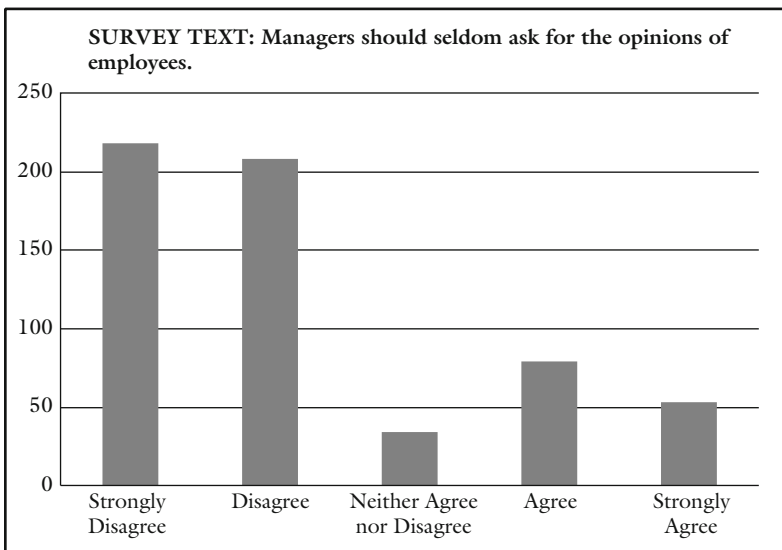


Figure 2 Managers should not seek employee opinions.

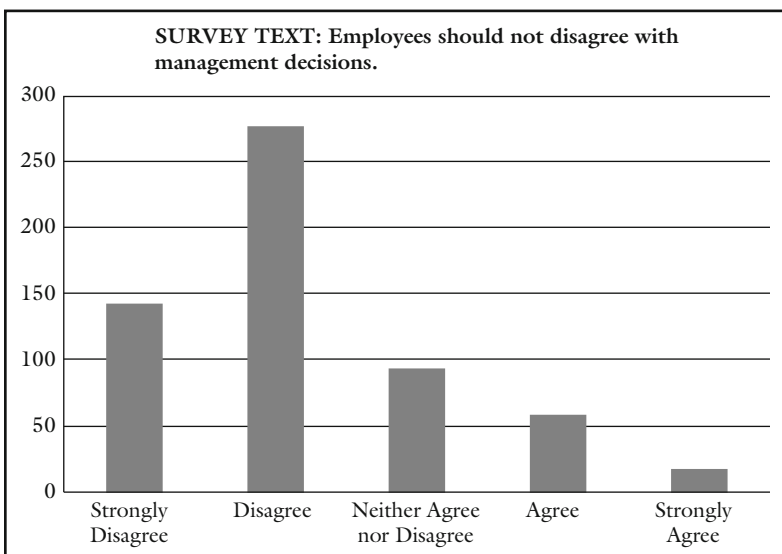


Figure 3 Employees should not disagree with management.

management extends even further to the idea of allowing for dissent in the workplace. When respondents were asked for their opinions about the statement, “Employees should not disagree with management decisions,” over 70 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

From iconic movies like *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* and *Star Wars* to the business fable *Who Moved My Cheese*, American culture has long marketed the virtue of speaking up against powerful forces. The American celebratory attitude in regard to its own rebellious founding suggests that standing up to authority is part of the country’s collective DNA. International workforces choosing to work for American companies might well find this dimension of American culture unique and attractive. All of this connects to the ubiquitous concept of empowerment that American organizations display prominently. This emphasis appears to be both well-understood and especially engaging to this particular international workforce. When responding to the item, “Managers should not delegate important tasks to employees,” 85 percent of those surveyed disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Empowerment is not universally valued in the workplace. The data collected here suggests a workforce drawn to the American presentation

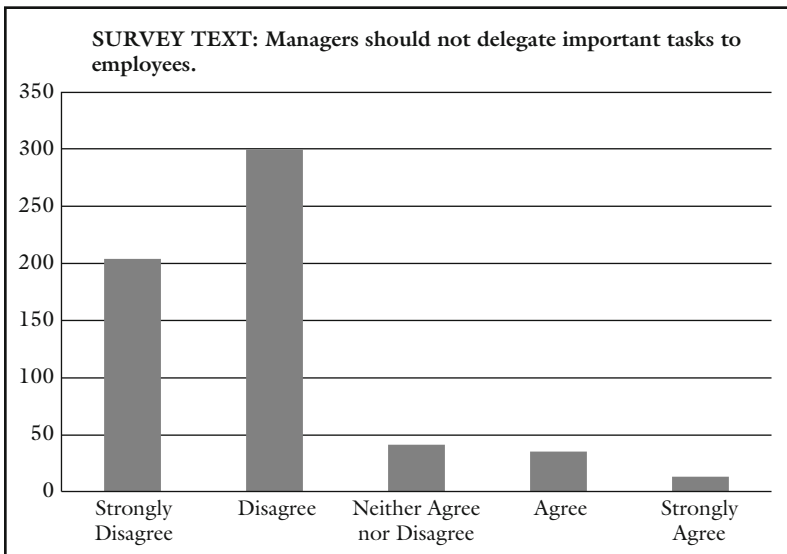


Figure 4 Managers should not delegate.

of work as an opportunity. In popular culture, an easy foil in American television shows and movies is the micromanager. The self-important bureaucrat or the surly by-the-book administrator always gets a comeuppance from an outsider who doesn't play by the rules. The idea that those in power should share it and that the pursuit of happiness is available to everyone has been effectively marketed as the American ideal to an international audience.

For the non-American workforce looked at in this study, it seems that the accessibility of organizational influence is a worthwhile feature of the U.S. structure. This interest in empowerment even appears to have interpersonal implications. Recall the American emphasis on the appearance of friendliness and the rejection of formality. For non-Americans choosing to work for an American company or organization, friendliness would seem to be an intangible benefit to employment. When responding to the item, "Managers should avoid off-the-job social contacts with employees," only 12 percent of those responding agreed with this sentiment.

The sociability, apparent openness, and the quick use of terms like "friend" seem to be appreciated by the State Department group. With many cultures emphasizing collegiality over friendliness in the work

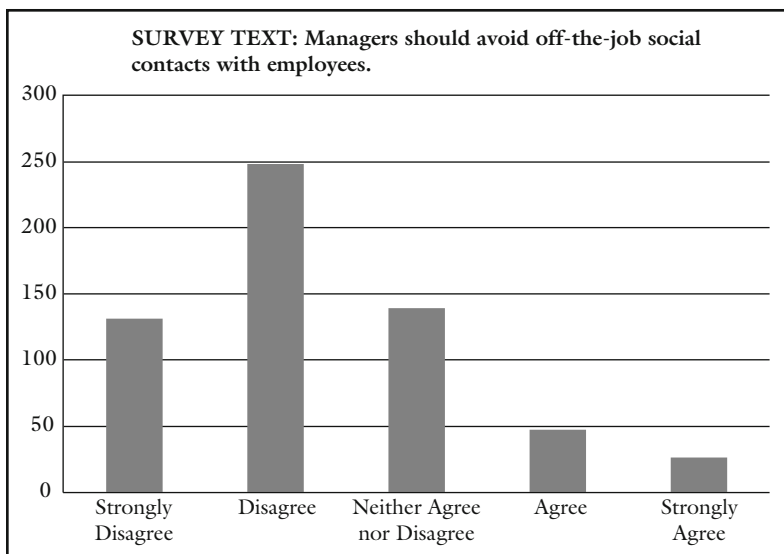


Figure 5 Managers should avoid social contact.

setting, the American “Please, call me Bill” interaction style would seem to offer an intangible job benefit to those choosing to work for U.S. organizations. If an American organization enacted these appealing principles, it would likely be appreciated by many in the international workforce. To see if the preferred open and empowering work environment is viewed as an asset by this group, it’s important to now consider their level of commitment to the organization.

In a number of areas surveyed, there appears to be much positive sentiment. When presented with the statement, “I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond what is normally expected in order to help this organization be successful,” nearly 90 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed.

There were similarly positive sentiments expressed in relation to the item, “I talk favorably about this organization to my friends as a great organization to work for,” with more than 70 percent agreeing or strongly agreeing. When considering the statement, “I am proud to tell others that I am part of this organization,” 75 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed.

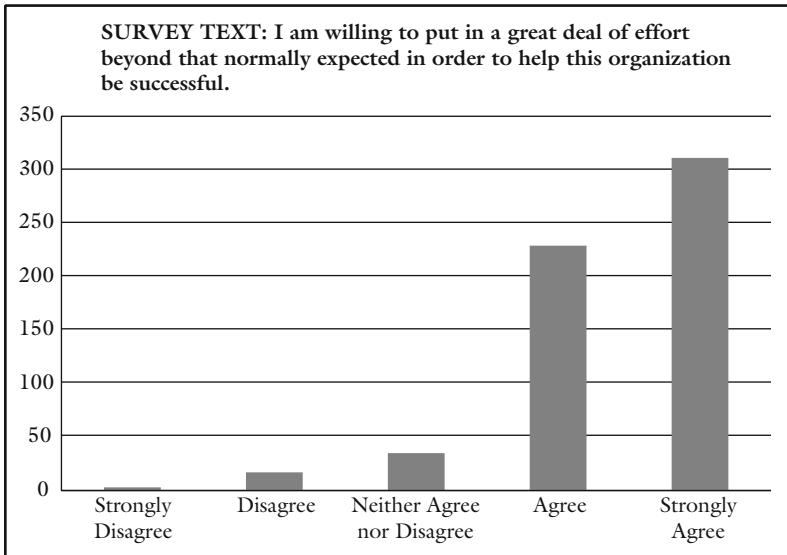


Figure 6 Effort beyond expectation.

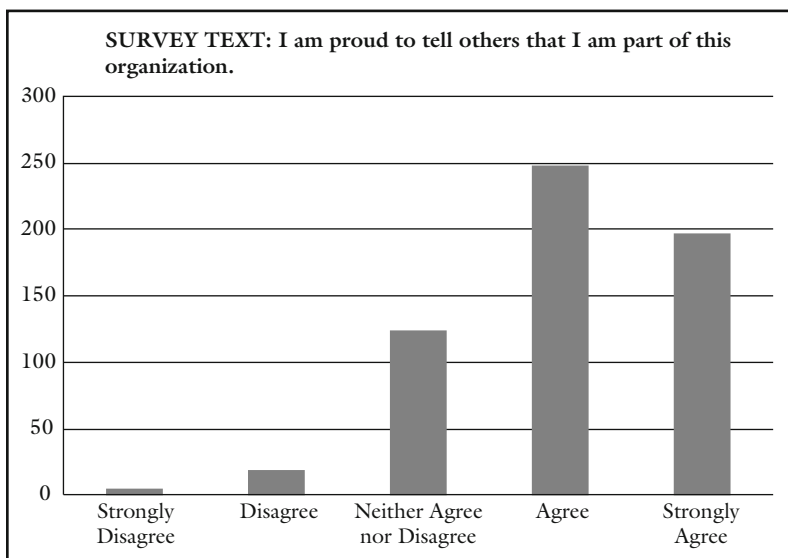


Figure 7 Proud of organization.

In keeping with the theme of organizational pride, over half of the respondents felt that the organization's values were similar to their personal values. Perhaps the most compelling response in terms of employee commitment came from the item, "I really care about the fate of this organization;" 80 percent of those surveyed expressed agreement or strong agreement with this statement.

Cumulatively, this large population of non-American employees in an overtly American environment would seem to provide excellent evidence for exporting U.S. organizational practices abroad. These employees generally seem to share American values, embrace American organizational structures, and offer demonstrated institutional loyalty. There are, however, some explanations for this apparent harmony that beg consideration. The items related to effort beyond expectation and concern for the fate of the organization may well speak to personal, rather than organizational, characteristics. A hard-working and committed employee may well agree with the old proverb that "a job worth doing is a job worth doing well." Their energy and concern for organizational outcomes may well be linked to their own personal preferences rather than anything that is overtly a part of the organization's structure.

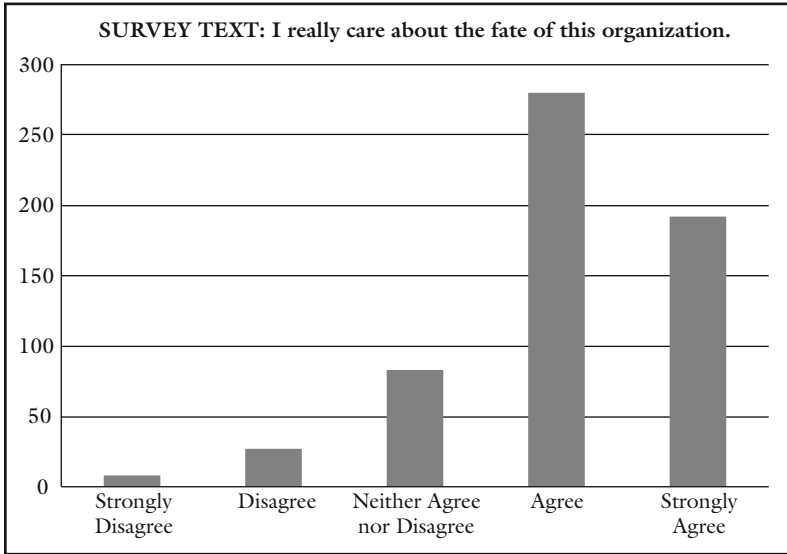


Figure 8 Care about fate of organization.

Adding to this is undoubtedly the positive associations that many may have with being able to say, “I work for an American organization.” Despite the anti-Americanism noted previously, the United States remains attractive for many in the world. The good salary, benefits, and perceived organizational strength of a position with the State Department undoubtedly carries much weight in many countries throughout the world. Similar perceptions follow American companies operating abroad. American companies like Visa, IBM, Google, McDonald’s, Microsoft, and Apple remain the most popular and valuable brands in the world (Stampler 2013). The positive perception of American organizations abroad and the positive association employment at such institutions brings with it afford prestige to the individual. So while the apparent engagement of international employees is undoubtedly worth noting, other factors may well be at play when considering the satisfaction of a non-American workforce.

Further indications of a more complex picture for the commitment level of international employees becomes apparent in the responses to a number of other survey items. When responding to the item, “I would be just as happy working for a different organization as long as the type of work was similar,” only 34 percent of respondents disagreed. Happiness,

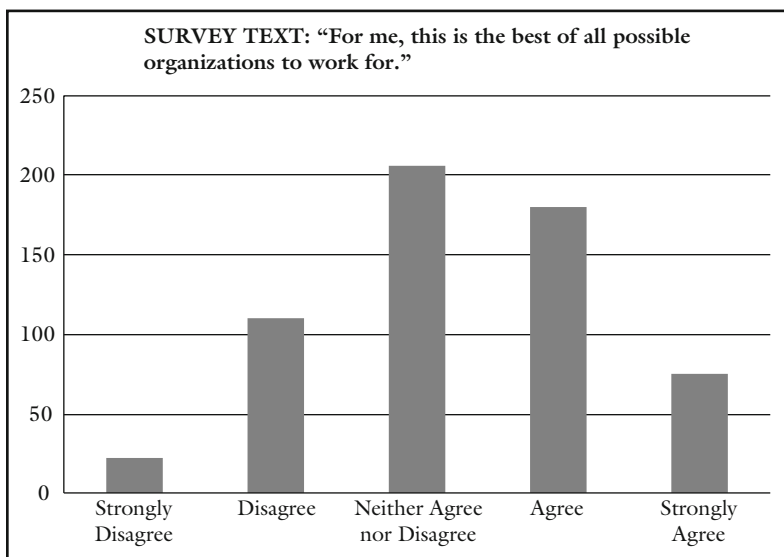


Figure 9 Best organization to work for.

for many respondents, it seems, is not uniquely tied to this organization. Additionally on the item, “For me, this is the best of all possible organizations to work for,” agreement or strong agreement was only slightly above 40 percent.

Other items more starkly demonstrated the inconsistency of employee commitment as two-thirds of respondents concurred with the statement that “I find it difficult to agree with this organization’s policies on important matters relating to its employees.” Most damning was that fewer than 30 percent of respondents disagreed with an item stating, “I could easily become as attached to another organization as I am to this one.” The reason these items prove particularly problematic in the overall satisfaction of this international workforce is that the lack of a unique connection to an organization can often foreshadow departure (Spencer, Steers, and Mowday 1983; Mobley 1977).

So Americans are viewed as friendly. They are seen as less stuffy and hierarchical than other cultures. American organizations are viewed as valuing team players and providing opportunities for advancement. The American Dream is a narrative understood and appreciated by many in the world. American organizations operating abroad attract committed

employees who hold these values in high esteem. And employment at an American organization is viewed as prestigious and exciting. Despite all of this, people working for the most American of American organizations are forecasting intentions that suggest they don't want to stay.

This suggestion is far from speculative. The non-American employees surveyed were asked how long they have been employed by the organization. Duration of employment was negatively correlated to commitment items at a Pearson Correlation of $-.097$ (correlation is significant at the 0.01 level). This suggests a strong likelihood that the longer a person stays, the greater the chance there will be a corresponding decline in commitment level. This decline in commitment based on tenure was seen in 19 of the 22 areas:

Significant statistical correlations were found in the areas noted. Of the three areas that did not trend negative in correlation, there was no statistically significant level of positive correlation. Thus, a very specific picture emerges about long-term employment. Employee satisfaction generally

Table 1 Declining commitment with employment duration

<i>Commitment Item</i>	<i>Pearson Correlation</i>
Effort beyond expectation	-.029
Loyalty to organization	-.058
Accept any job type	-.032
Similar values to organization	-.012
Prefer this organization to a similar job at another organization	-.068
Organization inspires me	-.036
Unlikely to leave	-.044
Glad I chose this organization	-.061
Advantage to staying in organization	-.044
Care about organization's fate	-.063
Best organization to work for	-.082*
Decision to work for organization not a mistake	-.022
Happy to spend career here	-.194**
Enjoy discussing organization outside	-.040
Personalize organization	-.075
Uniquely attached to organization	-.134**
Emotionally attached	-.101*
Personal meaning high	-.149**
Sense of belonging	-.136**

*If $p < 0.5$

**If $p < 0.01$

declines over time, with employment retention commitment less likely (“best organization to work for” and “happy to spend career here”). The personal, emotional, and community aspects of job engagement also tend to be less felt the longer one is with the institution. In sum, these items suggest a working environment that may become less attractive the longer one is employed.

In an ideal organization, employment commitment should increase with employment duration. A wealth of literature suggests employment duration should be positively correlated to commitment (Mowday, Porter, and Steers 1982; Mathieu and Zajac 1990). Moreover, this commitment should supersede potential problems the employee has with the organization and the work itself. That is to say, the organizational commitment that should come with employment duration is stronger than the problems that inevitably come up in a job. The more alarming prospect in this case is that disengaged employees remaining on a job are more inclined to engage in the “progressive withdrawal process” (Mobley 1977). In this process, declining attitudes toward a job typically precede temporary withdrawal—absenteeism, inadequate or merely adequate effort, and other such behaviors. These often foreshadow permanent withdrawal (i.e., quitting). In the case of an employee who remains in the position, the result can be limited energy being expended into performance.

Curiously, satisfaction with organizational culture appears to come more frequently from those whose values would seem to be most at odds with the perceived American entrepreneurship and informality. For instance, agreement with the statement “Managers should make most decisions without consulting subordinates” produced interesting correlations with a number of commitment items.

Table 2 Hierarchy and commitment

<i>Managers should make most decisions without consulting subordinates.</i>	<i>Pearson Correlation</i>
Effort beyond expectation	-.096*
Accept any job type	.192**
Organization inspires me	.118**
Best organization to work for	.175**
Personal meaning high	.120**

*If $p < 0.5$

**If $p < 0.01$

These strong correlations suggest that employees who accept top-down decisions may have a deeper personal connection and appreciation for the organization. It also could indicate that a willingness to accept directives would allow a change in job type, if requested by the institution. While a weaker correlation, the negative correlation between effort and top-down decisions could indicate that this mentality not only indicates that employees should do as they are told, but also that they should do *no more* than what they are told.

This trend of connection between job engagement and a preference for top-down structures is further evidenced in the item, “Employees should not disagree with management decisions.” Again, agreement with this perspective reliably forecast deeper commitment levels and organizational identification.

There appears to be a great deal of consistency between commitment and avoiding dissent. An acceptance of management without disagreement seems to indicate a strong correlation to a number of other elements of job satisfaction.

Basically, the non-Americans most likely to feel comfortable and committed were the ones with cultural values most antithetical to American ideals. And that’s a problem. More American organizations are moving toward a flat organizational structure. There’s a greater demand for creative, self-starting, self-supervising employees. American organizations

Table 3 Subordination and commitment

<i>Employees should not disagree with management decisions.</i>	<i>Pearson Correlation</i>
Accept any job type	.209**
Organization inspires me	.205**
Glad I chose this organization	.180**
Agree with this organization’s employment policies	.149**
Best organization to work for	.121**
Decision to work for organization not a mistake	.115**
Happy to spend career here	.145**
Personalize organization	.111**
Personal meaning of organization high for me	.193**
Feel a sense of belonging	.125**

*If $p < 0.5$

**If $p < 0.01$

moving abroad will attract those very types of people. The results of this research suggest those very people may find the American workplace inhospitable to their values.

The greatest danger, however, is that such employees could well view a hypocritical disconnect between the values and practices of an American organization. They may initially view American workplace culture as friendly only to discover meticulous documentation of specific required and prohibited expressions of friendliness. They may initially think of American organizations as places where the little guy can make a big difference only to discover that their input is ignored by upper levels of management. They may initially find comfort in the “family” feeling fostered in the workplace only to be shocked as they are dismissed to save costs. They may initially embrace the idea that their opinion matters only to discover that the opinions that get the most respect are the ones that concur with those in power. In short, such inconsistency could be seen as phoniness to the very people that American organizations around the world depend on.

Undoubtedly many of these workplace values are unique to the bureaucratic structure of the State Department. Given the importance and influence of the foreign service, analysis of these survey responses still deserve additional scrutiny. After all, much of the implementation of American foreign policy initiatives fall into the hands of foreign service nationals (Asthana 2006; U.S. State Department 2007). Understanding their job engagement, commitment level, organizational satisfaction, and cultural values are all worth exploring further. More broadly, however, the stories of these employees speak to the experiences of what it is like to be both within and without in an organization’s culture. Therefore, it’s important to let their stories be told in their own words by looking at their extensive responses to the narrative portion of the survey, and the next chapter will do so. The statistical results are paradoxical; satisfaction and commitment appear fleeting in those who should be most happy. By finding the themes that emerge from the employees’ stories, we can discover valuable context for understanding this paradox.

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CHAPTER 6

Exceptional Voices and Exceptionalism

On a trip to Brazil during a period of particularly intense hostility toward the United States, Richard Nixon inflamed tensions with a single benign gesture. Upon arrival, Nixon gave the “A-OK” sign to Brazilian onlookers. By doing so, he symbolically suggested that the country’s citizens could go screw themselves. They reacted to the gesture by booing, which, all things considered, was a remarkably diplomatic response. Such is the danger of assumption in intercultural interactions. The belief that what I *think* I see is what *is* often leads to the kind of misunderstanding that isn’t easily undone. The lens of expectation can be a carnival mirror. Speculating about the experiences of others necessarily is framed by one’s own point of view. The reality of those experiences can be something else entirely. The gap from OK to FU is a narrow one.

While the data explored in the previous chapter offers quantitative insight into the experiences of non-Americans in an American workplace, those insights are merely a starting point of understanding. A more complete awareness of those experiences can only come from giving those surveyed a voice. Their voice, in this case, comes from the often extensive and provocative narrative responses to the survey. From the 260 responses to the open questions, several dominant narratives emerge. These include:

- The State Department as a structurally flawed organization.
- Americans separate from local staff and lack cultural knowledge of the host country.
- Local staff deserves empowerment but is denied or ignored.
- Damaging policies and personalities hurt the working environment.

An overview of each area along with a series of excerpts from survey respondents provides an opportunity for better understanding their experiences in an American organization. It should be noted that for purposes of clarity and coherence, responses in this section were edited for grammar, spelling, and content (eliminating much of the bureaucratic alphabet soup that makes up the different departments of the organization and making the language easier understand). Additionally, this section extensively utilizes quotations from the responses given. These words bear a more eloquent and direct witness to the experience of working for an American organization than anything offered by this author. The full and unedited version of all respondents' answers can be found in the appendix of the book. This is because I don't want to suggest that the voices and feelings of non-Americans can only be understood or interpreted by an American researcher, which is especially important given several of the respondents' statements.

To better unpack the themes emerging from these narrative responses, each will be considered with some analysis and an ample number of direct statements from respondents.

The State Department as a Structurally Flawed Organization

Many responses indicate deeply rooted concerns about the structure and policies of the State Department. American culture is flexible, as previously noted, and changing jobs is an accepted part of one's career growth. The average duration of employment at a specific job is less than four years, with several career changes over a lifetime (Bialik 2010). While tenure for Americans in the State Department is longer, there are frequent promotions and reassignments. For example, most Americans are only posted to a specific country for two years or less. This has created a situation in which foreign service nationals are continually adapting to new American supervisors who typically bring in a new set of policies. These new items are often created regardless of the effectiveness of existing policies, because, "Change is good!" For non-Americans, however, there is the view that this prevents continuity and reduces incentives to invest since everything will undoubtedly change. The responses to the survey suggest that there are perceived gaps in long-term planning that make work less meaningful.

Related to this is the notion that Americans focus on personal advancement often at the expense of good policy, given that their time in a specific

position will be relatively brief by the standards of other cultures. Survey responses revealed concerns about consistency, as the work and communication styles of one American supervisor can be dramatically different from the style of the next one, creating a position of dependence on an unpredictable working relationship. This unpredictability in the actions and attitudes of the frequently changing American staff makes long-term organizational investment unrealistic. Additionally, as creating change seems to be rewarded over maintaining effective programs, several respondents felt that functioning processes are discarded when a new American supervisor arrives. Some sample responses speaking to this concern include:

There is very little long-term planning. The longest period is 1.5 years. No views, no long-term decisions. No American cares what happens after his or her three-year tour.

The problem areas are the local U.S. staff that most of the time focuses on empire building, lifestyle management, and advancement of the individual career and not the U.S. government's long-term interests!

The relationship with our American supervisors relies heavily on the personality and work style of our supervisors and is therefore subject to change every three years. Some of them do involve us and some of them don't. Each of them has a personal work style. Accordingly, the flow of communication is at times really good, but there are periods when it is not. These are the results of having watched Americans come and go over many years.

Sometimes it's really hard to work with many types of bosses, since they just come and go every two to four years. We have to start everything all over again. Everyone [new managers] wants to show their power, their skills, but sometimes it just does not make any sense.

The downfall of working in this organization is the continuous change of officers every one or two years. We have a difficult time in transition periods.

The fact that supervisors and managers change frequently makes it difficult to be attached to the organization.

I strongly believe that there should be a continuity line when officers are transferred. I mean that many times when a new officer is assigned at a post, all the work done by his/her predecessor is suddenly wrong [upon arrival], and everything starts over again every two or three years. I understand that changes are good when they mean improvement, not just for the sake of changing or doing things your own way. This is many times the cause of frustration to local employees—together with the saying "in my previous post"—and why organizations can't grow on a solid base.

It is sometimes frustrating to get new boss every two years, especially since your [own] knowledge base is really huge and [my] bosses are often junior officers.

The span of the American officers' attention is limited . . . they do not really care what will happen in the embassy after their time. I just do my job the best way I can under the circumstances, hoping for a retirement at 55.

We have gotten used to the fact that every few years officers change, and the new supervisors arrive with their own vision and management styles. Quite often, however, they tend to ignore the best practices established at post and force the changes.

Sometimes personnell/managing problems tend to be postponed indefinitely as the American officer in charge knows s/he will be leaving soon and is not willing to take on the burden of difficult decisions.

Management changes every two to three years, and it's a pure luck (or misfortune) who you will get next, because the atmosphere and everything in the office strongly depends almost exclusively on the next American's skills.

The two-year-tour basis at State is the very weakness of the system. By the time you establish a good work relationship, your supervisor is leaving. You cannot build up that expertise with your American partner. A good example of that is with Americans who stay four years. Performance is far better than with people who stay two years. In other words the big loser is the organization.

These responses suggest that commitment and performance are negatively impacted by frequent turnover in American supervisors working abroad. Another weakness identified was with the salary structure at many posts. While the websites promoting foreign service national job opportunities boast that salaries are comparable or better than private sector jobs in the host country, these responses paint a different picture:

We have become increasingly displeased with the poor salary adjustments that we have been given.

In general, I enjoy my work: I am happy to work for the embassy, but I think that the salary system is not fair.

My opinions that are of a negative quality reflect my dissatisfaction with my compensation . . . not my dissatisfaction with my job itself.

No wage increase is also creating a problem for the local staff, and they have started to seek employment in other organizations that pay more and have more benefits.

It is an honor working for the State Department . . . but truth be told, our salaries and benefits quite frankly do not match what our local market is paying for similar positions . . . we do not have a retirement plan or pension plan, and our low salaries make it difficult to cope with rising inflation. Most of us have sent [our] families back to [our] home country to cut down on expenses.

There is no motivation for work: Due to the high inflation that happened in our country during the past four years the current salary is not enough for the normal life. However we are always reminded that we work for the Department of State and should be proud of this fact! Salary is not [as] good as it was four years back, and there is constant pressing from the management that really brings stress to the local staff. I like my job and enjoy working for this embassy, however I have started thinking about finding some other well-paid job. (Just FYI- about 25 staff members left jobs here in the last year—one of the main reasons for their departures was the salary issue).

Many of us have put in years of work, and our salaries have reached the max. And they have another eight to twelve years more to go. There should be some form of incentives for these employees.

Related to compensation, many others indicated serious concern about the structural barriers that preclude promotion and the distribution of service awards. There is a feeling from many such responses that vertical movement is not possible, thus the incentive to work hard or invest in the organization is minimal. As such, many view a long-term commitment to the State Department as professionally untenable. Several responses in this area include:

Once you are in, you realize that there really isn't much room for growth—or at least, that is the case at our post. I think that finding the motivation to outdo yourself in your job depends a lot on your supervisors. We can't really look at it as an opportunity for promotion because there really aren't promotions here.

There are very limited opportunities for the career development. The longer you work, the less they are.

There should be more opportunities for promotions and recognition. Officers often lose sight of the consistent high quality output of non-American staff. Awards and incentives should be offered generously to deserving local staff. Otherwise it will generate work fatigue and frustration.

I have heard of how a technician rose to the rank of CEO in some private U.S. firms. This is something that can never happen here as these high-level posts are reserved for Americans.

The nature of FSN employment is such that long-term career opportunities are not readily available, and as such, employees should be encouraged to grow and develop to both benefit State but also in order to have skilled workers that move to new careers after a few years. For most FSNs, working for State means doing one position for life or leaving. When I leave, it will not be from lack of loyalty, but because at some point, the work has been accomplished and it is time to move on.

The upward mobility is also very much limited, which is also a great dissatisfaction factor.

I think the Department of State is a good organization to work for, but no one should spend his or her whole career only in this organization.

Retention will continue to be a problem at this post and other posts like it if something is not done to make it more attractive to stay [in terms of advancement].

It is very difficult to project your stay when there is very little room for growth. Good supervisors come and go and so does their recognition of your job. There should be some plan for professional advancement.

I still wouldn't recommend to anyone new staying here for more than three to four years, but I don't regret my experience nor working with colleagues. But I'm still looking to quit as there is no useful training, no salary incentives, no promotion opportunities, and our technology roadmap appears dissociated from any needs by technical professionals such as me.

The result of these perceived structural flaws is that many staff feel undervalued, with little opportunity for advancement and a seemingly endless rotation of supervisors who may or may not be competent or invested in the organization's goals. This suggests both cultural and job engagement concerns for this international workforce. For those looking for a highly ordered organization, the needs of continuity, loyalty, certainty, and provision of resources from authority are not being met. For those seeking a more egalitarian organization, the opportunity for advancement and the need for equity in compensation appear to be a concern for some. Likewise, these structural elements can negatively impact commitment and satisfaction levels. Issues such as pride in work, the feeling of being valued, and organizational relevancy are all put at risk. Cumulatively, the basis for the short tenure and declining motivation of these non-American employees can likely be found in many of the sentiments.

Americans Separate from Local Staff and Lack Cultural Knowledge of the Host Country

Another narrative theme of the responses is that of separation—separation of American supervisors from the local staff and the separation of Americans from the host country in which they are working. According to survey responses, the workplace separation has had a devastating impact on morale. Basic collegiality and the communication necessary for effective performance, according to some respondents, are noticeably absent. In some cases, this division has created a climate where non-Americans feel that they lack the respect necessary to do the job. Additionally, the

social and emotional needs of employees extend beyond paychecks, checklists, and hours worked. The absence of social contact, ranging from simple friendliness to an emotional investment in the lives of colleagues, can create problems for fully committing to an organization, as noted by respondents.

This separation between Americans and local employees extends to a cultural separation, as well. Lacking the cultural knowledge of the host country and failing to adequately communicate has fostered a situation in which American supervisors are dangerously distant from the culture with which they are supposed to be engaging. The results, as noted in surveys, are that many Americans make visible mistakes in dealing the local culture, fail to engage entirely, and show little interest in using the most obvious resource that could remedy this situation—the local staff. Some responses include:

I have always felt like there are “us” and “them.”

Americans don't really associate much with us, and we have also learned to keep our distance. Truth be told, we are like third-class citizens among the community. First priority is the Americans, then their family members, and then the locals.

What works in one country will not necessarily work in another. Cultural sensitivity is very important. Bad officers result in the Ugly American image.

Supervisors sometimes make a big difference between local staff and officers, while they should treat them equally. Most of the Americans do not have knowledge of the language and culture of the host country, which makes it difficult to deal with the mission contacts.

In relation to the question [about social contact off the job], 99 percent of American officers/managers at the post where I belong avoid off-the-job social contact with local employees, which makes for an incomplete experience.

I haven't had many officers who care about us.

When officers say, “We Americans, and you locals,” it is really hard to work.

The communication/understanding between American and local employees has become very distant. Communication, understanding, and mutual benefit are keys to building the bridges, and I hope that management becomes more aware of this. Although my values are similar to those of Americans and I take [pride] in the work that I do and how I do it, management decisions sometimes lead me to think “What am I doing here?”

The breach between U.S. employees and local staff is very wide, and I do not see a serious effort on the part of management to improve the situation. We seem to be an

afterthought or a necessary evil to most American managers, who pay lip service to the idea of employee integration.

Sometimes lack of communication is a real barrier between supervisors and subordinates . . . Cultural understanding is important and respecting differences.

More and more [American officers] often lack a European cultural understanding of European situations—and that makes the relationship more difficult.

American officers should also develop a greater sense for the local culture, because American culture is not paramount.

Sometimes, I feel that the [American officers] do not have the necessary training before coming to post, and they often have no clue about the culture of the country. I personally think that managers should be more aware of the country's culture and give opportunities to subordinates to see what they can do.

One of the issues that I have taken up with several other colleagues is the lack of social skills of American officers toward foreign employees in the sense that there is no inclusion within their circles. An example: during social gatherings it is very obvious that American supervisors will mingle and socialize with their own and leave us off to our own. There is no effort to socialize and [there is] socially, a lack of acknowledgment on a daily basis starting from the basic response to a "Good morning." There is a strong sense among the staff [that] this is we and this is you, we're not the same.

I would also recommend that [American officers] familiarize themselves with the host country's labor laws and labor culture, which might differ greatly from that of the United States.

I have come to dislike the "them" and "us" attitude that exists between FSNs and American supervisors. There doesn't seem to be much trust anymore. I used to socialize a lot with the American community but have completely stopped when it became obvious that new staff arriving at post were no longer interested.

I am not part of the family. I am just an employee.

The organization does a poor job of making me feel like a part of the team. It's almost like a caste system, with the Americans on one side and the foreigners on the other.

Our staff gets the same kind of treatment as the general public. There is no distinction between a local employee and an outsider. The organization does not own its locally engaged employees and they work with a sense of insecurity. The level of trust and respect [from the American staff] between the two communities, the non-American and the American staff, is diminishing.

Managers should know (in detail) about the culture, attitudes, and other factors of people of the assigned country.

Over the years, I have found that the American officers have become increasingly distant in their interaction with us.

It is my personal opinion that we suffer from an “us and them” mentality between the American staff and local staff at post, I personally feel that this is terrible for morale when American staff cannot even say “hello” in the corridors within the office. It is also my personal feeling that this mentality of “us and them” starts at the very top and works its way down.

I don't feel as a member of the embassy “family” as I used to before. There is greater feeling of “Americans” and “non-American” as separate entities, [though] we work for the same goals and aspirations . . . There is less mingling of American and Malaysian employees today compared with what we had enjoyed several years ago. It could be because of the 9-11 aftermath, and Americans have become more “careful” (and they should not be blamed for that “carefulness”) but more intermingling events sponsored by the embassy is probably the way to move forward . . . We forget that the most important element in any organization is human capital, and human capital is founded upon human interdependence and relationship building.

It is somehow frustrating when people do not trust FSNs enough just because they are not American.

The American officers need to learn the basic culture in country they work in order to understand the employee. We work as a team not as a boss/underling. Be humble but firm on decision making, but please listen when we inform you first. Minor mistakes can cause a lot of dissatisfaction.

Since India is so different from the United States, there is often an adjustment time needed when a new American officer comes in, as the officer comes in with perceptions based on what he/she is used to in the United States and finds that those [perceptions] might not work in local conditions.

Generally one is very aware of the strong dividing line between the two cultures and that we will always be considered an inferior . . . which is reflected in the way that requests are given. One point though is that from time to time a genuinely caring American officer comes along who isn't pretending to purport the “you are important to us” directive . . . that is when local staff actually gives their best.

The “Them & US” attitude of American officers and locally employed staff is nothing short of discrimination.

The sum total of these responses suggests that many perceive a two-tiered culture in this American organization. While this is certainly a function of the fact that these posts are “U.S. space,” one senses in these responses that the delineation of the two roles—American supervisor and local, non-American staff—extends beyond the fact that this is an American

institution. There is a disconnect between the projected warmth and friendliness of American culture and the experience of actually working in an American organization. These responses suggest that a basic level of respect and communication is lacking in the relationship. Many responses also show the link between this lack of personal and professional engagement and the lack of cultural understanding of the American supervisors. This lack of cultural understanding both hurts the ability to effectively utilize the skill set of non-American employees and the ability to develop and leverage local relationships.

Local Staff Deserves Empowerment, but Is Denied or Ignored

As the cleavage between local employees and American officers is noted by respondents, so too is the lack of authority that many non-Americans feel in offering their own expertise and experience on the job. This can contribute to a lack of perceived value by the organization for potential contributions from those employed locally. Many note that they have a high level of expertise that is underutilized and undervalued. The dominant theme of these types of responses is that the non-Americans have a valuable skill set and substantial human capital that could prove beneficial if fully realized. Ignoring the knowledge offered by local staff is identified in several responses:

Newly appointed American officers do not value our long experience; they ignore the knowledge provided to them and treat us with superiority.

I'd wish to have more responsibilities as a senior FSN who worked twenty years for the American Embassy.

I don't think any of my views/opinions matter or are considered.

Because, an American supervisor is always right; it is her/his way, or NO way. There is no control mechanism for American officers. Empowering us in many aspects will be helpful not only to create [a] more productive workplace but also to reduce personnel budget.

Officers must bear in mind that without us, they would not be able to perform their work in a timely and efficient way. They must be able to trust our work.

Sometimes we have to deal with new supervisors who do not recognize and/or have respect for the loyal service we have always given to the organization, as well as the vast experience and knowledge most of us have (in my case 26 years of service).

I believe that we should be delegated with additional duties in order to enable supervisors to dedicate more time to other issues.

For us locals—who do most of the work—opinions, are seldom taken into consideration.

In recent years, unfortunately, despite what we are told at training, there is a dangerous—I would say suicidal—move to disempower local staff who are the backbone and the continuity of the [State Department’s] mission.

Americans can learn from our knowledge and experience, but most of the time, they refuse to learn, thinking that they know everything. I have seen it a lot!

We [FSNs] are the ones who best know the country and the day-to-day running of post, so it would be best to communicate with us.

We generally accept American management’s authority when they make decisions without consulting, but if they consult beforehand, that would be very appreciated.

I would also recommend mainly younger American employees to not hesitate in using local experience and to be more helpful in their everyday activities. It should really be teamwork in order to reach better cooperation and achievement.

Management should include us in decision-making processes.

Also, since India was (until recently) regarded as a “third-world developing” country rather than a “developed” one (images from the West tend to show India more as a land of snake charmers and Rajahs, rather than one with an IT revolution, etc.), many American officers tend to be more cautious in the beginning when delegating responsibility to local staff.

We meet and exceed the standards at our post. Nevertheless, time and again we are having meetings resembling “school lessons,” where our boss is a “teacher.” Our boss recently arrived at post, and he does not understand a lot of things related to the job performance.

On many occasions American supervisors do not take into consideration the opinion of the employees, and we just have to accept the decisions. Over the years, the employees will not argue or discuss a decision being made that will impact their work environment. It is like they become submissive.

We are the backbone of the organization and they always try to give their best . . . But problems erupt when American officers (during their usually short tenure) try to show off, or are guided by their whims and egos, that often result in disruption in harmony in an otherwise smooth teamwork.

The opinions of local staff, who know the target audiences better, are not considered when planning/evaluating activities.

It would be nice to be treated with more consideration. Americans should realize it is a strong possibility that other nationalities also have valuable individuals. I have heard on so many occasions that we are the most important link in the organization. It would be nice if behind those words would be some facts to sustain these claims.

I find it to be a serious mistake that many have much to contribute to professional events and relationships in their area of expertise but are often ignored.

My embassy is structured in such a way that it appears the hierarchy is more important than any good idea or project because it gets lost in the many layers it has to go through to reach a decision-making level. American officers appear to be too reluctant to be proactive or to recommend our ideas to management. Too often, they see us as mere tools for realizing their ideas and executing their orders. That can be tiring!

American officers should understand that in order to produce worthwhile results they must partner locally.

We usually know their local circumstances and programs better, but for the Americans this is often difficult to admit.

The best management practice of the State Department would be to a) listen to their local employees and b) often do what these employees suggest!

As a non-U.S. citizen there is no room to make decisions or to work independently.

In my perception, we are underestimated and very often ignored specifically because of our qualifications and high level of professionalism. Many people working for Americans are overqualified and their abilities are lost or misused—the organization is focused mostly on the happiness of American supervisors. Other international organizations in my country treat their local staff as the institutional memory and backbone of the organization. At the embassy this concept is unheard of.

People are the organization, and if the management doesn't appreciate and value what we can contribute, it is only normal for them to become detached, lose morale, and finally leave the organization.

There appears to be a lack of value given to the unique competencies of non-American staff, which may be sorely needed by some supervisors. This suggests that a core need for many is the desire to be valued by the institution and the desire to contribute to the development and realization of institutional goals. The respondents also indicate that organizational structure and culture precludes this kind of organizational investment.

Damaging Policies and Personalities Hurt the Working Environment

Concerns about empowerment also coincide with examples of policies and personalities that hurt morale and hinder job engagement. In an environment where the two-tier system is so prevalently seen by many employees, coupled with the perception that American supervisors are

not engaged with the local population, it is not surprising that several profoundly disturbing examples of damaging behavior were identified. Collegiality and respect tended to be issues that many such responses point toward. Institutional policy, according to some employees, does little to curb this tension and in many ways, exacerbates the problem.

These responses also pointed out that there are few defined systems for airing grievances. The systems that do exist are under the domain of Americans, thus limiting the perception that these systems could provide honest mediation in a dispute involving an American and a local staff member. Added to the previously noted issue of frequent American turnover, the perception here is that it may be preferable to endure the abuse and hope the next supervisor offers a better working environment. As noted in some of the responses, this attitude of accepting organizational injustice creates the sort of negative climate that Masterson et al. (2000) showed to be predictive of a range of negative organizational outcomes. Some examples of such policies and behaviors include:

American supervisors do not seek guidance from non-American employees; they tend to believe that by being who they are, they do not have to request information from a local national. They act rude to their local staff, and sometimes discriminatory behavior is perceived. The statement "if it comes from a local employee, it does not count" is very common in this atmosphere.

We are treated as staff more often than as colleagues.

Most of the American officers that come to post do not regard us; they see us as substandard.

Americans usually talk down to locally employed staff and have an arrogant view toward the host country.

There are some Americans who like to terrorize employees by saying, "You will be fired if X happens." This makes the employee feel insecure. This is especially true in an African country like ours; they believe that they can get new employees easily.

The one downside with working at the State Department is that some Americans believe that they are superior or at least treat us in a condescending way that makes us feel that.

But the one thing I dislike is that we are sometimes considered as second-class citizens with second-class opinions.

The locally employed staff in my post has been so distressed by the humiliation and discrimination from management and American supervisors.

The Americans are unfriendly and uncomfortable with communicating—sometimes to point of being insulting.

We no longer park inside the embassy proper but in a separate lot. We are not entitled to sick leave when family members are sick. We are not entitled to R&R when environmental situations are deteriorating (for example when the Air Pollutant Index is considered seriously unhealthy—but American employees get such privileges). We are not entitled to purchase commissary goods. We are not respected the way American supervisors are respected.

Officers sometimes take credit for projects initiated by local staff or work we carry out. More credit should be given to employees.

The Department of State has no feeling in dealing with us and the main policy is WE DO NOT CARE.

We are not encouraged to discuss too much about this organization and our job.

As employees of this organization, we feel that we are discriminated and humiliated by some of our supervisors and managers and not treated well.

I was surprised by the “kiss up and kick down” American culture. It just doesn’t work.

It says a lot that the ambassador can call me by my nickname even if I never gave her permission for that, but I have to call her by her title and stand up for her every time she enters a room, every day for three years. I believe you earn respect but nobody, not even the ambassador, gets it for having people stand up for her.

I was very attached to the organization and I loved being a member of the U.S. Embassy team until my former boss allowed and even encouraged an American to take over a program that I had created and developed; that’s when I no longer felt part of the family, although I did not complain. Since then, I have felt that I don’t want a lifetime career as an employee here.

It is a shame that sometimes various negative characteristic traits of some American employees have such a negative influence and portray the institution in a completely obstructive light.

American officers should treat their subordinates with respect and seek other outlets for their bad tempers rather than taking pleasure in being mean and nasty.

American officers often do everything to make us not feel like a “part of the family.” There is no efficient system that would protect a local staff or control an American officer. There is no “punishment” for being a bad American supervisor. There is no institution behind the embassy; there is only a supervisor. Working in the U.S. Embassy and being proud is a myth.

I was sexually touched in a humiliating and public way by a supervisor. Two American officers were there when this happened. They said nothing and only joked about it when I brought it up later. I think they know this totally, completely is harassment but they want no involvement. If there is an investigation, it could go against their records and hurt their chances for a promotion. They think,

“The stupid foreigner will keep her mouth shut and make no problems . . .” This happens A LOT on many issues. They don’t care about us, only their careers. I have an advanced university diploma—do they ever treat me like I have something to offer? NO! The day I leave this place with my pride will be one of the best days of my life.

Those who listen cannot do anything; those who can, do not listen. So what’s the point?

Cumulatively, many respondents seem to view the organization as one that accepts and obfuscates abusive, discriminatory, and shortsighted behavior on the part of American staff toward non-American employees. Policies do little to curb what some respondents see as a climate of organizational injustice. Beyond concerns about compensation, development, and empowerment, respondents seem to be indicating that there are more basic concerns about the respect afforded fellow human beings.

While some of the items voiced here are unique to the experiences of the State Department, a great many can be applied to any American organization operating abroad. Will the Americans employed out of country stay for an extended period or jump quickly to a new location when opportunity allows? Will they be informed of the unique cultural environment they’ll be working in, or will they use a one-size-fits-all approach to cross-cultural organizational development? Will they engage the local population to learn and develop appropriate organizational strategies, or will they seek out other expat Americans and commiserate on everything they dislike in this unfamiliar environment they find themselves in? Will they ensure that local employees enjoy the same protections as American staff, or will they be complicit in organizational injustice because of their status?

These are questions that any American organization must consider when globalizing. The stakes are quite high. American organizations should project an image of fairness and equality that is consistent with purported principles of the United States. When widespread violation of these principles becomes systemic, non-Americans will not only feel minimized, they will feel betrayed. The impact of such a betrayal is profound. From compromising organizational effectiveness to reducing organizational value to ultimately compromising American standing in the world, understanding the impact of a gap between what American organizations *say* and what they *do* represents a crucial challenge that will be explored in the next chapter.

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CHAPTER 7

Lessons Lived and Lessons Learned

On September 11, 2012, the U.S. mission in Benghazi, Libya, was attacked by a group of heavily armed militants. The attack resulted in the death of U.S. Ambassador Christopher Stevens as well as three other people. While the number of State Department staff injured in the attack remains under scrutiny, it appears likely that one or more foreign service nationals were among the casualties. From 1998 to 2013, there have been more than two hundred attacks on U.S. diplomatic facilities (U.S. State Department 2013) and nearly one hundred foreign service nationals killed. Events like the attack at Benghazi and the numerous other attacks on American diplomatic outposts have been scrutinized, politicized, and debated extensively. Despite the blaming and hand-wringing, however, there is an inescapable truth: representing the United States abroad is dangerous.

While it's easy to focus on this research as an abstraction of workplace satisfaction and intercultural organizations, it's important to remember the context it comes from. Americans working for the State Department require the support of local staff for communication, engagement, and organizational productivity. More importantly, however, is the fact that non-American staff and their understanding of the local environment may perform an even more vital function of ensuring safety. Failure to understand and engage with the non-American workforce could compromise a great deal more than just productivity.

It is with that in mind that it is now necessary to consider the implications of the preceding survey results for the State Department, for American institutions operating abroad, and for the global perception of the United States as a whole. Initially, the noted correlation between commitment and a preference for hierarchy has significant implications to both the State Department and for American organizations looking to operate

abroad. However the result could be misleading and misread if not placed into a clear context. Specifically, a superficial reading would suggest that an American organization works fine in contexts where the local population accepts top-down organizational structure with a strong chain of command. This view would be shortsighted, however. The higher levels of commitment in such a population could actually mask existing problems and invite substantial challenge if staff are required to engage in more creative and self-directed work.

While cultures with a high power distance appear to be focused on following directives, there is frequently a covert culture that operates independently from the existing institution. The possibility of seemingly compliant employees “going rogue” and re-interpreting directives and policies—while ostensibly being committed to leadership—would have disastrous consequences for any sort of institutional coherence. Many American supervisors in the State Department lack the cultural awareness, linguistic ability, and personal relationships to get a sense of what local employees are thinking or doing outside the defined employment context (Asthana 2006; Djerejian 2003; Holt 2004). As such, it’s possible that nonsanctioned decisions and attitudes could exist, with American supervisors completely unaware. Such a situation could well be repeated in many American organizations operating outside the United States. Alves et al. (2006) validates this danger by showing that in stratified contexts, “the leader” makes most overt decisions, but “the followers” routinely make covert decisions on their own. As one survey respondent states, “American supervisors at the post where I belong avoid off-the-job social contact,” meaning that officers may lack any real sense of the attitudes that non-American staff have beyond the public face they share in the work setting. The result is clear: although employees may seem to fall in line with many policies and express a commitment to the organization, the secretive nature of those “without” compared to those “within” the organization can have damaging effects for any attempt at a unified or consistent institutional position. When leadership lacks the tools and aptitude to scratch beneath the surface in such a situation, the danger becomes even more pronounced.

Beyond concerns about the public/private dichotomy of non-American employees, there are also concerns about the ability of staff members to engage in self-directed leadership and creative organizational processes. Dynamic organizations inherently require creativity and initiative. For American organizations operating abroad, U.S. policies may not match

the situation on the ground—as one respondent noted, “A host country’s labor laws and labor culture may differ greatly from that of the U.S.” Additionally, when an organization needs to engage with the population in a different country, there is a need for substantial guidance and leadership on the part of staff who know the local culture far better than their American counterparts. The tension between those who “think” versus those who “do” will be problematic if hierarchically oriented local employees are expected to show initiative and create programming.

Concerns also exist about the perception of delegation as “weak management” and a threat to the established leader/follower roles (Sagie and Koslowsky 2000). A culture of dependency from staff to supervisors can stifle questions, comments, suggestions, and initiatives coming from those at the top of the hierarchy. Serious confusion can result when employees in such a situation are required to suddenly participate in decision making and engage with management (Kirkman, Gibson, and Shapiro 2001; Hoon Nam and Wie Han 2005). Suggesting the dangers of this relationship, one respondent states, “We often don’t feel responsible for anything, nor do we have initiative.” For such employees, empowerment could be problematic, and the perceived “commitment” could be misinterpreted by a management structure that is not fully aware. When an employee says “yes” to empowerment, he or she may only be saying “yes” to a supervisor and not “yes” to a policy.

Although we can see a positive correlation between a preference for structure/order and organizational commitment, this correlation should not be viewed as fixed or certain in a context in which the staff’s expectations of a leader are not fully embraced by some American supervisors. American workplace culture frequently preaches empowerment while practicing hierarchy. It’s that paradox that can be a source of confusion and a hindrance to organizational outcomes. As Aycan et al. (2000) argue, a leader in stratified culture is expected to give guidance, protection, nurturance, and care to the employees, while subordinates are expected to give trust, loyalty, deference, and appreciation. Many respondents indicated that American supervisors can be a source of hostility, humiliation, and threatening behavior.

As such, hierarchical cultures may appear to embrace working for an American organization. At the same time, however, they may reject the institution for failing to meet the expectations of “protection” and “care” from management. Statements from respondents such as, “No American officer cares what happens after his three-year tour,” and, “Many times

when a new supervisor is assigned, all the work done by his/her predecessor was wrong and everything starts over again every two or three years,” suggest that the guidance from management can lack consistency and clarity. Cumulatively, the danger is that staff oriented toward rigid structure may feel that the management, although hierarchical, has not embraced its role as “provider.” Thus, the visible face of commitment may hide a covert and undetected culture that undermines or rebels against the goals of the organization.

While the dangers of misinterpreting perceived higher levels of commitment are serious, perhaps a greater danger exists in the finding that culturally egalitarian employees correspondingly have lower levels of commitment. In many cases, these employees may feel stifled by an American workplace culture that doesn’t allow them to demonstrate their skills or contribute to decisions made about projects. Such an orientation suggests a perception that everyone should be part of the decision-making process, with an emphasis on equality and interdependence between leader and subordinate (Sagie and Aycan 2003). Respondents making statements such as, “I don’t think any of my views/opinions matter or are considered,” “We are not part of the decision-making process,” and “My views are ignored,” indicate a tension that exists in the hierarchical structure of the institution. With many surveyed employees taking pride in their knowledge, experience, and credentials, failure to empower such individuals to participate fully in the organization suggests a possible explanation for the reduction in commitment and retention.

Beyond participation in decision making, the sharing of information is also an important expectation. Drawing on Harzing’s 1999 work, egalitarian workplace cultures typically prefer a freer flow of information. Decisions are more transparent and communication is less obtuse. The need for an individual to be in the loop is stronger and the communication chain is more inclusive. In this case, however, it seems that many feel shut out from the process. A possible defense unique to the State Department might be that the need for secrecy and separation is based on security and confidentiality requirements. However, previous investigations into the Department’s modus operandi of information policing instead of information sharing suggests that the motivations are, at best, antiquated (e.g., Cold War relics) or, at worst, an attempt to hold onto power through controlling the flow of communication rather than opening up dialogue (Council on Foreign Relations and the Center for Strategic and International Studies. 2001). Similarly, other organizations

also unconvincingly use propriety and confidentiality as tools for institutional control.

It should also be noted that employees studied here have shown understanding and appreciation for the need for some aspects of communication to be controlled for security reasons: sample statements include, “We can’t discuss much out of the office about the organization due to operational security reasons,” and, “We are not encouraged to discuss too much about this organization and our job with people outside due to security concerns”. This non-American workforce not only respects this control, they are expected to engage in it as well. One could argue that it is possible for an organization to communicate transparently without exposing what clearly needs to be private, secure, or confidential. More dangerously, the act of withholding information affords the informed with the power of privilege. For employees who value equal organizational treatment and who want to be legitimate and contributing team members, the act of not sharing communication can alienate the individual from the institution.

The issue of organizational justice also suggests why many are less inclined to fully commit to the organization. Distributive justice, a belief in fair outcomes based on action, was seen as important by those looking for a participative workplace. The idea that the actions of the individual ought to be positively connected to that individual’s outcome is another area in which respondents suggest there are shortcomings in the organizational structure. The concerns consistently voiced about salary inadequacy, the lack of performance incentives, the inability to advance regardless of work quality, and the perception that American supervisors are not effectively checked by the institution—“There is no ‘punishment’ for being a bad foreign service officer”—suggests a belief that there is little relationship between action and outcome. For those culturally less rooted in hierarchy, this gap makes full organizational investment impossible, since the connection between “what I do” and “what I get” is a foundational element to a participative organization (Lam, Schaubroeck, and Aryee 2002).

With that in mind, it’s important to remember that people expressing a preference for an open workplace may *tolerate* rigid organizational structures. Such tolerance, however, does *not* necessarily indicate organizational investment. A number of responses indicate dissatisfaction with the lack of respect, autonomy, and power they feel in the organization and, perhaps not surprisingly, a suggestion that their employment duration will not be extended—“When I leave, it will not be from lack of

loyalty, but because at some point, the work has been accomplished and it is time to move on,” “No one should spend his or her whole career only in this organization,” and “I still wouldn’t recommend to anyone new staying here for more than three to four years”

All of these results are remarkably consistent with Gouttefarde’s 1996 study of a mixed multinational organization. As was the case there, the closed information channels, the lack of distributive justice, and the barriers created by those in the upper echelons all combined to stifle communication and hinder effective organizational relationships. As one respondent in the survey stated, “We feel like neither fish nor fowl.” Yet none of these challenges would necessarily be insurmountable. Two-way communication, respectful discussion of roles, honest negotiation, and an understanding of cultural variables could all be employed to build values the entire team buys into. Unfortunately, the statements from respondents and the existing literature all point to substantial organizational weaknesses that may make these solutions unworkable. Statements such as, “Americans don’t really associate much with us, and we have also learned to keep our distance,” “I have come to dislike the ‘them’ and ‘us’ attitude that exists,” and, “I have found that the American supervisors have become increasingly distant in their interaction with us,” suggest that the communication gap will make the dialogue necessary for cultural understanding difficult in many cases.

Fernandez, et al. (1997) suggest that not being culturally aware can be a big cause of expatriate failure. When there are barriers to effective cultural communication (uniformed supervisors, few opportunities for dialogue, belief in the superiority of American culture, etc.), the chance to discuss the nature and structure of the organization in the context of local culture can be lost. There will almost always be friction between local practices and standardized institutional policy. As such, many potentially competing and contradictory policies must be explained by both supervisors and staff. When that can’t or doesn’t happen, the fuse is lit for numerous potential crises. Uninformed managers might give orders in a way that suggests self-importance to an audience that wants openness. Similarly, in another situation, the same manager might delegate important tasks in a way that is seen inappropriate in certain cultural contexts. The result of all these areas could compromise organizational effectiveness and the engagement of the team members. Without consistent, two-way communication, these results, while unfortunate, should not be unexpected.

To sum up, the results of the survey show that those more inclined toward hierarchy are also more inclined to be committed to American organizations. Far from being good news, these results also indicate that there might be serious resentment toward American supervision that is masked or ignored without active dialogue and follow-up. The results also suggest that decreased engagement from those who want a more equal workplace may be cause for concern. Narrative comments from participants show that the dialogue necessary to overcome both sets of challenges just isn't taking place. This is the paradox of American culture: openness is celebrated while rigidity is maintained. Unsurprisingly, this is an enormous challenge when working for Americans. Strict adherence to the rules by employees buys little loyalty from management. Empowerment does not translate to power. This paradox is hard enough to understand for many Americans. Its impact is even more significant when considering the experiences of non-Americans in the American workplace.

To get a better understanding of this significance, it's important to note that 57.3 percent of the total population studied had a tenure of employment of zero to three years. While the population of new employees may have had (for whatever reason) greater inclination to complete this survey, this percentage is essentially consistent with overall organizational attrition rate of about 38 percent. This is similarly consistent with findings of this study. A significant number of non-American employees have not had and do not expect to have extended employment with the organization. This is echoed in their narrative responses, including, "Once you are in, you realize that there really isn't much room for growth," "There are very limited opportunities for the career development," "The nature of this employment is such that long-term career opportunities are not readily available," "The upward mobility is also very much limited, which is also a great dissatisfaction factor," "Retention will continue to be a problem at this post and other posts like it if something is not done to make it more attractive to stay," and, "I still wouldn't recommend to anyone new staying here for more than three to four years." These attitudes would suggest the stratification of organizational power and decision making make long-term employment unattractive.

Regardless of motivation, such a short duration of employment can create operational, relational, and cultural barriers. Operationally, the replacement of employees is costly and fosters inefficiency. For example, the training and orientation time alone for a new employee is typically over one hundred hours with significant associated costs (Ehrenberg and

Smith 1997). More importantly, the service level and communication quality that comes from frequent employee turnover can create serious setbacks for an organization. In this case, the U.S. State Department overtly expresses a mission of improving the American image abroad and providing excellent service. When staff frequently leave positions because of a lack of opportunity or because of cultural tensions, consistent service quality is difficult to achieve. Such discontinuity could well prove disastrous in presenting a coherent message and managing the specific concerns of worldwide posts.

The issue of cost cannot be overlooked. When employees leave, they take the skills and knowledge acquired during their time in the organization with them. This knowledge was developed at great time and expense. Add to this the extensive time spent acculturating to the American workplace, and we quickly get to a point where turnover and replacement is an enormous sap on the operational budget. Clearly, if an employee engages in ethical misconduct, lacks relevant skills, or has a job that no longer serves an organizational function, change is necessary. But the frequency and extent of non-Americans leaving the State Department suggests greater systemic problems. Longer-tenured employees are more likely to grasp the policies and programs of the location. Their institutional memory can be informative when new initiatives emerge. There is a greater understanding of the formal and informal policies and procedures of the host country in terms of their relation to organizational policies. In sum, capable and experienced non-American staff are essential. The organization would benefit from longer and more sustained commitment from local employees. This research suggests that the organization is at a significant institutional disadvantage.

While the operational implications of higher turnover are important, there are relational aspects that should be considered as well. There are a number of instances where the relationships built by non-American staff could be damaged with frequent turnover. As employment law differs from country to country, it is critical that employees in a supervisory position have connections to the host countries' labor bodies, the fluctuating employment rules, and the implications these might have on how jobs are constructed by an American organization. As overseas initiatives can extend over many months and years, employee fluctuation could compromise the decision-making process. Perhaps most damaging for an organization like the State Department is the fact that building bridges depends on the quality of relationships with the local population and institutions

(i.e., businesses, schools, universities, etc.). Those relationships become unsustainable when there are frequently new voices initiating contact. If building bridges is one of the goals of multinational expansion, those bridges are at risk when turnover doesn't allow sustained engagement.

This is particularly dangerous in cultures valuing continuity of contact. Hofstede's work notes that the meaning of a relationship is often different in more collectively oriented cultures (Hofstede and Hofstede 2005; Hofstede 1980). Continuity, trust, mutuality, shared values, and tradition are often emphasized in collective cultures. Business decisions that Americans may view as merely transactional take on a relational character. In such contexts, an international employee's contact base is, in many ways, the relationship base of the American organization in that country. A new staff member tasked with maintaining organizational outreach could disrupt such relationships. For the external contacts, the relationship may need to be rebuilt. Imagine what happens if change and turnover become a standard. Further disruption could then severely damage the institution's reputation, as consistency, loyalty, and certainty are perceived as compromised in cultures valuing long-term collaborations and connections.

Beyond turnover costs, there are also costs associated with unengaged employees who stick around. For such employees, the result can be staying in a position with limited energy being expended into performance. Employee narratives offer a clear picture of what such performance would look like: "I [have worked] here for 31 years. I am 53 years old, and although I tried very hard to change this mentality, I have finally become cynical and I just do my job the best way I can," and, "Despite the fact that I am very willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond [what is] normally expected to make this organization more successful, there is no motivation." Such employees may, perhaps, pose an even greater danger to the accomplishment of organizational goals than employees who quit early on. Unmotivated employees can infect the workplace with cynicism and decrease the motivation of their colleagues. In some instances, disengaged employees remaining with an organization can create a "shadow institution" that actively undermines the overall goals and priorities of the whole. The fact that they can retreat into their home culture and stay separate from their American colleagues punctuates the danger even further. Some of the first significant research on shadow organizations was done by Allen and Pilnick (1973). In describing the possible negative outcomes of shadow organizations, they state:

What lies beneath is another organization, frequently invisible to outsiders, rarely committed to writing, but usually more powerful than the first. Of what does it consist? It consists of the informal day-to-day behavior carried on in the name of tradition, habit, and expectation; it consists of what people actually do rather than what they say . . . As such, [shadow organizations] often subvert rather than support an organization's priorities. Whatever the company does is likely to be less successful than it might otherwise be (3).

These shadow institutions often consist of long-time employees who have developed a number of negative norms that spread through the organization. Working on an extended research project that lasted over ten years, Allen and Pilnick utilized analysis of workplace discourse at over 100 companies. Some of the emerging narratives of negative shadow organizations show startling similarity to the responses of the non-American workforce surveyed. Some examples from their work include:

- Norms of autonomy and empowerment. These include the development of an “us/them” mentality concerning management and leadership: “They are always trying to take advantage of us around here.”
- Norms of performance. These represent acceptance of a “good enough” standard of achievement: “There’s no point in trying around here . . . mediocre results are satisfactory.”
- Norms of leadership and supervision. These norms tend to be negative for the organization when managers view policing and supervision as their role rather than development and empowerment: “Managers tend to overlook their training . . . it’s best to hide your problems and avoid your supervisor.”
- Norms of employee relations. When employees view their goals as separate or antithetical to the goals of the organization, the outcome tends to negatively impact organizational effectiveness: “Our organization doesn’t care about the welfare of its associates . . . many of us are treated merely as an extra pair of hands.”
- Norms of innovation and change. These encompass an overarching rejection of change and a suspicion for new ideas: “Around here, we hang onto to old ideas long after they have outlived their usefulness . . . you better not have an idea your boss didn’t come up with first.”

Non-American employees, especially long serving ones, are often viewed as the glue and institutional memory of an American organization

abroad. In many ways, they are empowered to shape the organizational culture in ways that an American supervisor coming from the outside cannot. In terms of their influence in a shadow institution, they have both the credibility of seniority and the status of being a part of the host culture. Thus, their attitudes will shape the attitudes of those around them in ways that may or may not be detected by many Americans. This is especially true considering the difficulties Americans may face in understanding the local language and culture.

There's a decline in commitment for non-American employees that correlates to employment duration. Many of their responses echo the norms identified in Allen and Pilnick's work. As such, we see another potential barrier for organizational effectiveness when there's cultural friction like this. The declining investment of some employees could lead to an overall decline in engagement for the whole of the non-American workforce.

This also suggests that local staff may not have fully realized their own role in the "us/them" paradigm many have observed on the part of American supervisors. If senior non-American staff with declining engagement say there's an "us/them" mentality as previous research suggests, the result could be that others accept the validity of this view. Basic principles of perception accentuation and self-fulfilling prophecies come into play. The suggestion of division between Americans and local staff make the reality of that division more likely. This is not to suggest that the cultural aptitude or work attitudes of Americans abroad is always optimal; both academic research and numerous items discovered in this survey show otherwise. However, when employees become disengaged during long-term employment and their attitudes about the institution are shared, the possibility of meaningful work and dialogue between local staff and Americans becomes more remote.

How does such a disconnect happen? After all, over time, American supervisors should presumably gain more understanding after being exposed to local work cultures. People working for U.S. organizations should, correspondingly, start to understand the unique quirks and tendencies of American culture. Over time, collaboration and understanding should improve—probably not to a Kumbaya level of tearful embraces, but at least to the level of firm handshakes and getting things done. Unfortunately, this research suggests that's just not happening.

A question on the survey asked, "How often do you have contact with American officers in the course of your duties?" The thinking behind the question was that there should be some correlation between job

satisfaction, engagement, and communication if Americans and non-Americans interacted more frequently. There was, however, no consistent correlation between intercultural contact and job investment. It could be that cultural values are so fixed that contact with Americans is insufficient to create change. This view, however, ignores the fact that virtually all intercultural contact moderates the views of both sides.

One might also suggest that the Americans' values are so wildly disparate, that a consistent and singular perspective never reaches the non-American staff. As Faul argues, "Each individual will explain that he, personally, is not like other Americans. He is better (1999, 6)." Despite this slightly jingoistic view, however, such a perspective is inconsistent with the circumstance. Some level of consistency in the values and attitudes in a population of American supervisors should be expected. After all, they've likely received the same kinds of training, selected the same sort of career, and chosen to work abroad. While plausible, such presumption is ultimately unsatisfying in answering the question. Modern American culture adheres to the belief that more communication solves any problem. Television talk shows act as confessionals where sharing feelings is supposed to bring catharsis. Blogs and social media reinforce the belief that sharing is the foundation of a good relationship. Despite this belief in the transformative power of positive communication, we're still left with the uncomfortable question of why communication has so little impact for American organizations operating abroad.

According to survey respondents, the answer appears to be that the interaction lacks the necessary engagement. Statements made by respondents pointing to this include, "Communication, understanding, and mutual benefit are keys to building the bridges and I hope that management becomes more aware of this," "Lack of communication is a real barrier," "This is we and this is you, we're not the same," and, "American officers have become increasingly distant." The suggestion here is that work communication between Americans and non-Americans lacks the sort of personal quality that is a part of most meaningful relationships.

Some might suggest that this is not only acceptable, it is appropriate. After all, an organization is tasked with getting things done, not fulfilling some esoteric sense of cultural belonging for those employed. Yet questions remain and the lack of meaning in intercultural communication may point potential problems for American organizations. If the people working directly with the Americans fail to understand American culture, how likely is it that the local population can be reached? Will the

organization adapt to the local culture? Or will it be forcing Walmart greeters on frightened Germans once again? I'm not suggesting this as the only possible outcome for this phenomenon, nor should American organizations be challenging officers to go out and proselytize to foreigners to accept American values. Rather, this is merely a result that should give pause as the shift in values that typically comes through intercultural contact is not happening.

While the survey results are interesting, it's important to consider them in a broader international context. There are prevalent attitudes of anti-Americanism that undoubtedly shaped the results of this survey, and many of these attitudes are reflected in the results. The narrative responses, for example, suggest that many of the prevailing attitudes of anti-Americanism are present in this non-American workforce. Specifically, looking at the work of Katzenstein and Keohane (2006; 2007) and Glick et al. (2006), several categories of anti-Americanism could be identified in the 260 written statements from respondents. Specifically, the following stereotypes of the United States were identified in respondents' descriptions of the State Department and its personnel:

- Arrogance
- Cultural insensitivity
- Laziness
- Lack of future focus
- Coldness

In the case of arrogance, a number of respondents noted that the attitude of the organization minimized the importance of non-American contributions and reflected an "us first" perspective toward the organization. While several noted that the U.S. mission was important, when Americans viewed local staff as incompetent, it made the work unsatisfying. The important local perspective was not sufficiently included as part of the decision-making process. Cultural insensitivity was also indicated as being a primary problem; American supervisors were viewed as uninformed and, at best, disinterested in the local situation. The perception of laziness along with a lack of future focus were typically seen as foundational issues to perceived organizational weakness, with American staff focusing on short duration initiatives with little effort extended toward sustainability of policies and programs. Like cultural insensitivity and arrogance, the perception of many respondents appears to be that

the American supervisors put up barriers to access for “outsiders” to the extent that their attitude is one of coldness instead of collegiality and friendliness. In sum, the stereotypes of anti-Americanism are present in non-Americans in the institution. And while difficult to link causally, one could credibly argue these attitudes affect items such as duration of employment, organizational investment, and job commitment.

There is, unfortunately, a chicken and egg element to such a thesis. Sure, it’s possible that anti-American attitudes frame how non-Americans see things. It’s also possible that anti-American attitudes have the ring of truth and simply confirm observations. If the opinions reached by many regarding Americans emerged organically through their employment, it suggests that the existing stereotypes of Americans as arrogant, insensitive, lazy, and disengaged could be based in reality. That is to say, the stereotypes come from observed American behavior and are true. If, on the other hand, the stereotypes existed in a culture prior to employment, it could suggest that the negative image of Americans is so pervasive that neutral and open interaction may now be difficult.

Psychologists and scholars in the social sciences write a lot about the idea of confirmation bias: I presume person X to be wretched and awful and, surprise, therefore I view that person’s behavior as wretched and awful. In the case of negative perception of Americans, it could be that the stereotypes of the United States have so permeated the world that close contact with Americans will only serve to reinforce those stereotypes. If non-American employees, a group that has willingly chosen to work with a U.S. organization, are so shaped by these negative preconceptions, it hinders any internationalization attempts by the United States. Alternatively, let’s say a non-American has an open and positive attitude toward Americans. Now let’s say that same person has frequent interaction with American supervisors and gradually starts to view America negatively. This may suggest that many of the world’s worst perceptions of Americans not only exist but are part of the culture of a prominent American organization operating abroad.

The research conducted on foreign service nationals doesn’t exist in a vacuum, however. Non-American employees like these have an important identity beyond the workplace. It’s difficult to quantify the extent to which these organizational tensions and contradictions may contribute to worldwide anti-American sentiment. While there are only several thousand foreign service nationals worldwide, it could be argued that a number of characteristics regarding their position may produce substantial

impacts on world opinion. A good analogy would be to programs like sister cities, student exchanges, and the Fulbright program. In such programs, direct and sustained engagement with the U.S. and its institutions has produced numerous “citizen diplomats,” who articulate and explain American attitudes and values to their country of residence.

While not specifically identified as such, non-American employees serve a similar role. It’s not difficult to imagine foreign service nationals returning home after a day of working at a U.S. post only to be asked questions by their friends and families about what Americans are “really like.” It could also be expected that the people of their community will give the answers provided a greater level of merit. Thus, the opinions of 30,000-plus people worldwide will be important in shaping the opinions of an exponentially higher number of constituents. If their opinion is that Americans are honest, fair, open, and engaged, it could go a long way in changing the perceptions of many.

If, alternatively, non-American staff give answers that mirror anti-American opinions, one could similarly expect that the negative stereotypes will be validated. The stereotypes may even be made more intense considering that those working for the United States are seen to be in a position of greater knowledge about America and its values. Essentially, the words of employees profoundly influence the brand: in this case, the brand *is* America. Currently, no literature or publications coming from the State Department suggest an understanding of this important function of their international employees. For any American organization, it would be a profound mistake to overlook the external value of employee attitudes. This is immeasurably more important abroad, where local employees are frequently a country’s window to the United States.

For the State Department, an unhappy international workforce could have implications beyond just branding and constituency building. The impact of compromising the morale of local staff could also contribute to negative perceptions on the part of the international community. While local staff indicated a willingness to go beyond expected performance levels, the reduced commitment with employment duration, the interest in other professional opportunities, and the troubling narrative responses indicate that turnover and fluctuating commitment levels are compromising performance. This compromised performance could play a role in decreased effectiveness in interaction with the host country.

Let’s consider a hypothetical example in the group surveyed. If the staff working on international visas are all recent hires or feel dissatisfied with

their supervisor or position, they may be less helpful in processing visa applications. This, in turn, may cause visa seekers to view the institution as being obstinate, disengaged, or arrogant. Organizational dysfunction more broadly influences negative attitudes toward the United States.

Here's another possibility: Non-American staff are tasked with putting on an event. The date of the event is set by an American supervisor and, unfortunately, will occur on a culturally significant local holiday. Generating any interest or attention proves unfeasible. With energy and resources committed to a project doomed to fail in connecting with a host country's population, a bridge-building opportunity is lost, to say nothing of the frustration local staff inevitably will feel.

While these examples are specific to the population surveyed, there are undoubtedly comparable situations faced by any American organization operating abroad. If you want to recruit the best staff and develop a strong local reputation, you simply have to do better than this. If relational barriers, miscommunication, frustration, and a lack of understanding persist, success abroad will remain elusive.

These challenges are complicated and multifaceted. Nothing singular can be seen as causing worldwide resentment or limiting the effectiveness of American multinational organizations. The attitudes of foreign service nationals cannot be directly linked to global negative attitudes toward the United States in any directly measurable way. It would, however, be shortsighted to dismiss the role local staff play in creating the world's perception of the United States. More than just impacting an organization's bottom line, the multiplicity of individual attitudes can deeply affect global attitudes. Cultural dissonance and declining levels of commitment deserve consideration in this important population.

If foreign service nationals are seen as a crucial instrument in international engagement, failure to effectively utilize them as a resource must also be considered when world opinion suggests that a lack of engagement is a serious shortcoming of the United States. Yet, this is not just a shortcoming of the State Department. International expansion without corresponding consideration of cultural challenges affects every multinational organization. It's important to note, however, that such failures are not necessary nor are they terminal. As such, the next section of this book will explore building a successful international organization where diversity is a source of strength, rather than a source of friction. Many of these ideas are informed directly from the results of this study but have broad applicability to any organization moving

beyond its own borders. As other international companies, NGOs, and multinationals face similar dilemmas in terms of rotation, utilizing local staff, and public outreach across a broad spectrum of cultures, these recommendations merit consideration for contexts beyond the State Department.

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CHAPTER 8

Engaging Without Enraging

The culture challenge is daunting. Fortunately, there's a secret formula to doing it right. The formula involves eleven herbs and spices and a recipe developed by a U.S. Army mule handler who was self-promoted to the rank of colonel. The "colonel" in this case is Harland Sanders and the restaurant is KFC, originally known as Kentucky Fried Chicken. While KFC gained popular attention in the United States for a curious "sandwich" creation called the Double Down (the bacon filled entree uses fried chicken patties in lieu of bread), the restaurant chain has enjoyed enormous popularity in Asia because of innovative multicultural management. In some Chinese cities, for example, the image of Colonel Sanders is more common than Mao (Mellor 2011).

While McDonald's struggles to gain a foothold in the Chinese market, KFC thrives. The reasons are immediately relevant to understanding the importance of cultural adaptation. McDonald's entered China and maintained both their menu and management structure. The thinking was that the Chinese would be so charmed by the fast food chain that their expectations and palates would follow. KFC's approach, however, was integration. The menu offers items such as the Dragon Twister (a chicken wrap with duck-style sauce), spicy tofu rice, and porridge with pork, mushrooms, and pickled eggs. KFC's management structure is not only more important than its menu, it's likely the reason for the menu's uniqueness. KFC's parent company, Yum Brands, "has hired Chinese managers to build partnerships with local companies in its expansion drive and used their expertise to offer an array of regional dishes that appeal to domestic tastes" (Mellor 2011).

China is not the only beneficiary (if that word applies here) of KFC's innovative approach to multicultural management. While Christianity is a minority religion in Japan, the population loves the American festivities

associated with Christmas. With limited access to turkey meat, KFC in Japan came up with the slogan “Kurisumasu ni wa kentakkii!” (Kentucky for Christmas!) in 1974. By integrating local interests—enthusiasm for Americana and secular Christmas festivities—many Japanese families place Christmas orders with KFC months in advance to avoid two-hour lines in restaurants. Again, core organizational principles are authentically and successfully owned by a local culture. While the problems of internationalization are frequently much more complex than selling finger lickin’ good chicken, such lessons are quite relevant here. In the previous chapters, we’ve gained insight into the challenge of working for Americans. With this in mind, it’s important to now consider some ways in which Americans and non-Americans can work together, rather than merely beside one another.

Overview of Recommendations

First and foremost, culture is at the heart of many of the findings in this work. It is clear there is a demonstrated need for increased cultural training on the part of any American supervisor operating abroad. Many of the expectations of local staff related to cultural values could be better met with greater understanding and a more open perspective. This cultural engagement could then be the sort of interpersonal engagement that allows for better working relationships overall. In terms of public outreach, it’s clear that the substance of the message still needs to originate from the institution; naturally, it’s still Kentucky Fried Chicken and not Kentucky Fried Platypus. However, a change in metaphor needs to occur in how local staff are viewed in making sure that message reaches the local target audience.

Viewing local staff as a bridge and seeing their work as a high-level consultation on the preferences of the community would be a powerful change from a culture that too often seems to view local staff merely as a conduit for programs owned by the institution. For the State Department, a key change could begin with longer postings for officers. This would ensure that American officers acquire local expertise while providing an incentive to use it, as their time at a given post will be longer. Similarly, long-term placement of supervisors should be a concern for any international organization operating abroad. With frequent rotation, there is little incentive to understand the local situation as another location is just years, or months, away.

To facilitate interaction, there should be more combined trainings and events that include both local and American staff. This would simultaneously create a better link between the two groups, improve the skill sets of both audiences, demonstrate a perceived equality between local staff and American supervisors, and provide a feeling of worth to participating local staff. With these enhanced organizational positions for local staff, the next step would logically be to create better incentives for long-term organizational commitment by providing empowerment, advancement opportunities, and rewards. Again, no one would argue that local staff should control the totality of an organization's mission. However, an alternative organizational structure creating access to new challenges, responsibilities, and achievement for local staff could go a long way toward answering questions about the viability of a career with the organization.

Going hand in hand with this increased responsibility for local staff would be increased accountability for American supervisors managing an international workforce. A system of upward evaluation would allow local staff to assess the quality of the work being done by Americans on site. For such a system to be effective there would also need to be protections that allow for the airing of grievances on the part of local staff to ensure that high evaluations are not coerced. Such a system has been widely and successfully used to ensure that one culture isn't privileged by an organization.

Such a comprehensive implementation of programs could lead to fewer cultural misunderstandings, better integration of staff to organizational goals, improved outreach to local communities, and a power structure that changes the view of hierarchy from "power over" to "power from."

Recommendation: Increased Cultural Training for Supervisors

The training available for Americans relocating to an office abroad is limited. Few programs directly relate to cultural interaction, outside of language courses and classes that cover basic social niceties such as how to shake hands—or not shake hands. For the State Department, deficiencies in linguistic ability suggest that even the language courses are being underutilized. But more than language, understanding the basic concept that culture shapes the epistemology of a group has profound implications for effective international operations. Knowing that power distance shapes a group's perspective on leadership might better inform an American

supervisor about what to expect when meeting a local official than simply knowing the culture's customary greeting habits. Understanding the collective and individual nuances of a country can provide information about what sorts of incentive programs might be successful for a team. Exploring a culture's perception of time might allow for more realistic expectations about the speed of the negotiation process. Perhaps most importantly, this moves culture toward an epistemological view and away from a customs and manners mentality.

This deeper view of culture as a way of knowing would improve engagement with the local staff and would allow improved organizational processes. For example, on the issue of power distance, Bing (2004) offers examples related to change management effectiveness:

How do you handle those with a preference for a hierarchical workplace?

- Use senior staff to make announcements/to communicate change
- Use legitimate power to exercise authority
- Tell subordinates what to do differently (do not leave it to them to figure out "how" to do thing differently)

How do you handle those with a preference for a participative organization?

- Use influencing skills
- Include them in a discussion; explain your (or the company's) position
- Allow for questions and challenges
- Provide a forum where they can be involved in discussion/framing
- Explore "how" things will be different after you provide the "what" (85).

For supervisors in international organizations, exploring such issues would be an excellent exercise in reflection about culture and communication. Although no training program could adequately explain all aspects of culture (nor should it), moving American supervisors beyond the stereotype mentality toward a broader understanding of cultural motivation would be beneficial to both staff and the organization. And there must be meaningful consequences for those who fail to take the culture question seriously. This cannot be yet another aspirational goal that is celebrated and then ignored. Supervisors demonstrating cultural competence in

building effective teams should be rewarded, and those failing to connect their work with the culture in which they operate should receive punishment or demotion. Only when policy requires that cultural understanding is a basis for organizational success will institutions escape the practice of willful ignorance.

For example, recall that more stratified cultures have a higher degree of apparent organizational commitment. As we have seen, such a stated level of commitment does not necessarily translate into increased employee engagement, with masked feelings of dissatisfaction just beneath apparent compliance. For an American not versed in the often tricky task of understanding a culture, this inconsistency could lead to them to wrongly believe that hierarchical cultures are more loyal. Likewise, the lower levels of commitment in egalitarian cultures may be misread as insubordination when they just want more transparency and a greater voice in the decision-making processes. Training that increases the sensitivity and awareness of these different views could offer insights into how cultures function. There will always be a tension between representing the culture of the institution and adapting to the environment of the host country, and there should not be an expectation of cultural pandering. Mediating this tension can be the starting point for a dialogue that allows culture to be better understood on both sides.

Recommendation: Local Staff and Bridging the Community

As this research looked at a very specific population (non-Americans working for the State Department), it's important to consider how a more inclusive workplace culture could benefit the organization. In this case, the centralization of diplomacy has been documented as a trend for decades. In the United States, the president largely controls foreign policy independently from the State Department. A key function of diplomatic posts has increasingly been engagement and outreach to the local community along with management of day-to-day bureaucratic and consular functions. As officers in an international organization can never be expected to fully build up networks and connections in the host country, it becomes incumbent for the local staff to play an active role in organizing and directing this outreach. Peterson (2002) identifies a number of elements in State Department public diplomacy specifically that could be remedied by FSNs playing a greater role in the conception and delivery of outreach programs:

[The State Department] must adopt an “engagement” approach that involves listening, dialogue, and relationship building . . . Traditionally, U.S. public policy has been communicated via a push-down method, which suffers from limited reach and inadequate explanation to foreign media. Policy is created, speeches given, press releases written, and press conferences held—all with a primary focus on addressing American news media. Messages are typically delivered by a limited number of officials to foreign audiences, composed primarily of representatives of governments and international organizations. Foreign publics get short shrift. This push-down approach affords little open discussion of the basis for policy decisions. Communications, geared toward a domestic audience, assume a keen understanding of the American system of government—knowledge that is often deficient among foreign publics. Often absent is the linkage of policies to the values of others, indeed to our own values of freedom and democracy (92).

While the essential message and story of this outreach still will come from the organization, the process, structure, and style of this outreach best comes from local sources. Folk narratives of the business world abound with disasters that occurred when companies pushed forward without considering the needs of the community they operate in. In Brazil, for example, the camellia flower has a ceremonial function for funerals. When Revlon launched a camellia-scented perfume in the country, the response unsurprisingly lacked enthusiasm. The aroma of death is universally unsexy. A lack of local understanding ultimately costs an organization both real and cultural capital. Similarly, diplomatic missteps are often linked to a lack of understanding of the local culture—George W. Bush’s famous use of a “crusade” to stop terrorism, for example.

Public outreach carries with it many dangers for organizations not fully integrated into a culture. An American supervisor might suggest that due to Facebook’s popularity as a social network, it is an ideal platform to reach the youth of the country. However, in many countries—Russia and China, for example—there are similar but locally unique social networking tools. Public outreach for organizations like the State Department might include cultural programs such as the presentation of American artwork. Concerns about composition, color, and appropriateness would all need to be considered by people aware of cultural context. Program effectiveness, therefore, requires the input of members of the community.

Considering both the results of this study and requirements for effective intercultural engagement, the need for real empowerment becomes

self-evident. Local staff need to be given the authority to conduct much of an international organization's public outreach. An appropriate analogy would be that of an advertising or marketing agency: The agency staff don't create the product, yet they are accountable for how the message is presented. Ideally, they are given a great deal of autonomy in creating messages that will generate results. Cotton (1996) identifies numerous areas of success in such self-managed teams. Despite concerns that self-managed teams would ignore leadership directives, results indicate that such groups are actually more engaged in the policies of the leadership—with increased job satisfaction, productivity, and reduced absenteeism as important additional benefits. Moreover, self-managed teams tended to function in a variety of different cultural settings, albeit with different structures (Sagie and Aycan 2003). In American organizations operating abroad, this would have the added benefit of reducing the perception of American provincialism and making the workplace feel more culturally inclusive.

As the literature suggests, the biggest gap for the United States in getting its message out is a lack of cultural understanding for the communities it is trying to reach. For an international institution to effectively communicate with diverse populations, the messages need to be constructed by members of those diverse populations. This may represent a radical departure from the hierarchical and territorial perception that Americans know best that persists in many organizations, including the State Department. Such a cultural shift in an organization would not come easily, but the potential success of empowering local staff, especially when they're speaking to local communities, should not be underestimated.

Recommendation: Long Term Placement of American Supervisors

For Americans, change is good. From soap to cars, cultural orthodoxy suggests that if it's new, it must be better. So entrenched is this idea that American incumbent politicians frequently engage in the semantic gymnastics necessary to suggest that a vote for a long serving politician is actually a vote for change. Similarly, promotions, job changes, and reassignments are all viewed as an important part of career growth. When an American is assigned to an office overseas, that employee may view it as an exciting but ultimately temporary opportunity. In this context, change and fluctuation may actually be a detriment to an organization's mission. A recurring theme of the narrative survey responses was that

short duration postings hurt accountability, integration, and consistency. Constant changes, in this case, have likely led to more stagnation than improvement.

For the State Department, the primary argument against longer postings is the perceived danger of “clientism.” Clientism is the idea that officers would “go native” and begin to see world events from the perspective of the country where they are posted rather than from the perspective of the country they represent. The reality is, there is no documented study on the point at which someone working abroad is at risk for engaging in clientism. One could argue that in the age of the Internet, inexpensive international telephone calls, satellite television, and easy air travel to and from the home country, the risks of clientism are minimal in comparison to what they were in the past.

In a bygone era when people went to a foreign country for years with limited communication to their home country, the risk of beginning to identify with the local culture was far more acute. This is clearly no longer the case. Coupled with the fact that, according to the narrative portion of the survey, Americans tend to primarily associate with one another, it could be argued that the risk is almost nonexistent. In cases where officers do seem overly focused on the needs of the country they are operating in, reviews of their performance should reflect this. Staying focused on the needs of the organization is always a condition of employment, and guarding against clientism should not be viewed any differently from other aspects of job performance.

Clientism, however, has been given the metaphoric quality of a communicable disease. The very term used to describe the condition is “clientitis,” which seems to sound similar to tonsillitis or appendicitis. While the extent and duration of contact that causes this country-as-client view has yet to be adequately measured or clearly defined, “clientitis” as the threat that requires short postings remains fully intact. The basis for this concern is threefold: the accusation of clientitis remains a pariah, the fear of clientitis allows officers to refrain from the difficult and often messy process of cultural interaction, and short-duration postings allow for faster career advancement.

Initially, the appearance of clientitis represents one of the more damaging accusations an officer can face (Armacost 1996; Schafer 2000; Krizay 1988). The perception that an officer is no longer representing the interests of the institution compromises both the competence and integrity of the officer in lasting and damaging ways. Incidents in which simply

acclimating or working with the local community can bring charges of clientitis from other diplomats and officers. The term, it seems, has the power of fact whereby the mere accusation that an officer has gone native erodes that officer's credibility to such an extent that lasting damage may be incurred, regardless of merit.

One might suspect that personal grudges and resentment of those with the ability to more effectively operate in a foreign culture could also be a motivating factor in the accusation. The process of engagement with local populations in conflict zones is considered even more suspect. In arguing about the dangers of clientism, the conservative American policy institute the Heritage Foundation questioned the actions of the British Foreign Service during the Falklands conflict (Krizay 1988). They stated that British officers in Argentina recommended that Margaret Thatcher, British prime minister at the time, pursue diplomacy before considering military action and argued, "The proclivity to accommodation shown in that instance by the British Foreign Office is an institutional characteristic of most foreign services" (1988, 2). While criticizing restraint and cultural engagement is hardly a surprising position of the Heritage Foundation, the force of threat in such criticism is undeniable. The cumulative message here is that officers engaged with the local population risk being branded as disloyal, unreliable, weak, and perhaps even unpatriotic. This alone makes the idea of short postings and a lack of engagement with local staff an organizational standard.

Beyond political witch hunts, the fear of clientism serves other practical functions, as well. Using clientism as a justification, officers are allowed and potentially encouraged not to become meaningfully involved in the culture of the host country. The stress created by meaningful and sustained interaction with another culture is not trivial. Storti (2002) found that meaningful intercultural interaction—interaction beyond superficial or tourist-level—can actually produce the symptoms of physical illness on the part of those involved in the interaction. There also tends to be an expatriate subculture where expats from a country or region tend to band together in isolation when placed into a new cultural environment. Given that most international organizations and multinational companies can provide ready access to people of a similar background, such subcultures are easy to find. In the case of the State Department, clientism can moderate this concern.

Isolation from the community can be justified to ensure that Americans are never unduly influenced by the country in which they reside. Such a

justification provides a remedy against the enormously taxing work of intercultural interaction. The most stressful period of intercultural interaction typically occurs later in the relationship. Differences at the beginning of intercultural relationships are typically minimized, seen as trivial, perhaps charming, or even only as a minor irritation or inconvenience. It's only as time goes on that such differences are seen realistically. "It's so cute how the non-Americans say hello" eventually becomes "I hate how *they* do things in this country." Supervisors leaving a country after only a short period of time never have to deal with latter. They can avoid a great many of the challenges, and miss many of the rewards, of intercultural interaction. For the State Department, the fear of clientism can serve as an ideal justification.

Beyond reducing the intercultural stresses of international work, short duration postings have another compelling advantage for many American supervisors: they create more advancement opportunities and reduce accountability for programs initiated during a posting. At the conclusion of one posting, officers in the State Department have the opportunity to bid on where they will be posted next. Each new bid can bring a move to a more attractive location, a job with higher levels of responsibility, or the chance to affect policies at a post in a diplomatically important country or region. By increasing the number of postings, there are, necessarily, more chances for advancement. To justify this ascension, officers are then compelled to create meaningful new initiatives at their current posts in a relatively short period of time, promotion does not come from maintaining something that is already good. This, coupled with a lack of understanding of the cultural environment they are in, creates a situation in which potentially unworkable programs are developed in short order with long-term outcomes not really considered as a part of the decision-making calculus. This was validated in many of the narrative responses in this research with statements such as:

- There is very little long term planning; the longest period is 1.5 years.
- The problem areas are the local U.S. staff who most of the time focus on empire building, lifestyle management, and advancement of the individual career and not the U.S. government's long-term interests.
- We have to start everything all over again. Everyone [new managers] wants to show their power, their skills, but sometimes it just does not make any sense.

- The downfall of working in this organization is the continuous change of officers every one or two years.
- The span of the American officers' attention is limited . . . they do not really care what will happen in the embassy after their time.
- The two-year-tour basis at State is the very weakness of the system.

With limited long-term thinking, it may be multiple “generations” of American supervisors before the full ramifications of previous policies are understood. This represents a long enough period of time that any accountability is lost. Ironically, the one group of people who serve as the organization's institutional memory are the non-American staff. However, without any legitimate power, their views on the long-term implications of new policies have little traction. The solution here is quite clear. U.S. organizations must ensure that Americans working abroad stay long enough to understand the situation on the ground. Correspondingly, there needs to be a system of accountability for their work that extends beyond their time working in a specific country.

Several respondents suggested that longer serving American supervisors tended to have a greater understanding of local conditions, a better working relationship with the local staff, and an interest in creating more sustained initiatives. The current norm for a posting is approximately one to three years, depending on area. By shifting this to a three to five year system of tours, meaningful understanding of international communities would likely increase. Cultural differences would be brought to the fore and real dialogue would be harder to avoid. Programs requiring long-term relationships and planning would benefit from American supervisors who take the long view on development and results. Beyond these benefits, local staff tasked with working for a chronically unproductive or hostile American supervisor would now have an incentive to speak up, rather than merely waiting for the year or two to end and hoping for better luck on the next one. In sum, a system of greater American continuity could create an environment where decisions are better grounded in the local reality and more sustainable over time.

In the context of longer postings, the issue of clientism needs to be considered in a meaningful rather than subjective way. Internal research and the evaluation of officer performance should examine the extent to which country identification affects the integrity of the organization's work, if at all. While there is potential risk in such a program if local culture is found to unduly influence an officer's decision making, the dangers of culturally

unengaged officers making decisions with nominal regard for the future are not theoretical. Again, much of this information is specific to the U.S. State Department. It's likely, however, that corollaries exist for any American company or organization doing work abroad. The charge that an American employee has lost his way or gotten too embedded with the natives is hardly uncommon. Angling for reassignments that could lead to advancement minimizes the need to understand a local culture. As long as such sentiments are accepted and enabled, American organizations will be at a disadvantage when operating abroad.

Recommendation: Local Staff Evaluation of Officers

Local staff can provide the institutional memory for an organization and be a bridge to non-American publics. American supervisors may come and go, there are always new leaders, and new priorities, but the local staff can be the continuity for American organization that extends beyond these changes. The only way that continuity can have meaning, however, is if the local staff can provide their input into the quality of work being done by a supervisor and comment on the long-term results of policies and procedures initiated by previous American supervisors. Such an arrangement could offer the organization a better understanding of the conditions in a country over time and provide context for evaluating the work of American supervisors. Reciprocal evaluations would also have the benefit of ensuring that local staff have the opportunity to voice concerns about the attitudes and actions of ineffective American managers. They would also provide the chance to express appreciation for exemplary supervision. Numerous scales exist for this sort of reciprocal evaluation. Each could be adapted to meet the needs of local staff in their evaluation of supervisors. The results of such reciprocal evaluations have shown great potential as evidenced in the findings of Daley,(1997) who states:

Organizations and supervisors need to pay particular attention to those factors that employees expect them to provide [and, hence, hold them accountable]. Fairness and trust are salient. Yet, the preservation of fairness and trust are indeed found in the details of administration. Fairness and the trust it engenders are not the result of subscribing to general principles, but are earned from adhering to those principles in carrying out day-to-day activities. The performance appraisal process and the duties of protecting merit are a crucial aspect of this day-to-day struggle (308).

So what are the dangers of not having a policy of reciprocal evaluation when expanding abroad? Before answering, it's important to note that there will *always* be reciprocal evaluations where employees assess their supervisors. The real question is whether an organization wants to benefit from this evaluation or face the consequences of ignoring it. Consider these hypothetical scenarios:

- An American supervisor, freed from the political correctness he views as plaguing to American culture, is suddenly “free” to sexually harass female non-American staff at an office overseas.
- An American organization, liberated from a litigious workforce, selectively provides employee benefits at its foreign office.
- An American company opens a factory abroad. No longer bound by costly employment regulations, staff are largely treated as slaves, facing abuse from supervisors.

Recall that telecommunications now ensure that no secret can stay a secret for very long. Eventually, stories like these get out. With only a cursory investigation on any Internet search engine, it's quickly apparent that dozens of international organizations have faced these very issues, to say nothing of similar stories found in this very study. By providing a system of employee feedback and taking meaningful action based on the results, organizations can certainly improve their bottom line. More importantly, though, such feedback allows for the protection of reputation and ensures that supervisors are meeting ethical and legal standards.

For an organization like the State Department, such a change in thinking would require significant structural changes. Marques (2008) notes that there are some common mistakes made in creating supervisory evaluation programs. Some of the shortfalls include:

- Putting employees in a position of vulnerability for honest assessment
- Organizational complicity in minimizing negative supervisory evaluations
- Ignoring or discarding reciprocal evaluations
- Viewing any one evaluation in isolation

For many American organizations operating abroad, the relative position of non-American employees makes each one of these areas a concern. If local staff believe that honesty will lead to retribution without the

possibility of redress, the accuracy of reciprocal evaluations will obviously be compromised. Concerns about some American organizations “protecting their own” and minimizing or discarding negative evaluations would also prove to be a disincentive for honest feedback. After all, why risk honesty when the outcome produced will be nominal at best? The reciprocal evaluation process also carries with it a risk that personality clashes will be exacerbated by a litany of “he said/she said” dueling evaluations. To help minimize such concerns, these evaluations need to be part of a multifaceted system in which the perceptions of those who work *for*, *with*, and *above* a person are all taken into account. Doing this would create an incentive for people, especially American supervisors, to focus on collegiality, respect, and teamwork, something that many respondents indicated was desperately needed.

Recommendation: Empowerment and Advancement for Local Staff

An important part of any of the previously stated recommendations is a greater opportunity for advancement and promotion in local staff. For local staff to feel invested in organizational decisions, they need to be more fully included in the discussion. Again, this is not a recommendation that local hires need to direct organizational decisions. There might be some matters related to confidentiality and security that they are necessarily excluded from. It is important to note, however, that many organizational day-to-day procedures and new programs could benefit from the insight and expertise offered by local staff who reside in the host country.

The organizational culture must also work hard to solicit this input from a population that may have felt excluded from participation in organizational processes. In the case of the State Department, American officers must create a space for dialogue where non-American staff are part of decision discussions. Merely allowing ornamental participation on the part of local staff is not sufficient. American supervisors must build functioning relationships with the local staff and facilitate a real chance for decision input. Supervisors must also ensure that local staff who respectfully dissent on ideas and proposals are not discouraged. Their purpose in decision-making must be more than to rubber-stamp proposals already agreed upon by the “Americans in charge.”

The result of such participation should be policies that are more in line with local reality. After all, it’s unlikely that an American suggested that

porridge with pickled eggs would sell like gangbusters in China. This would also have the ancillary benefit of making the local staff feel more involved in the organization's priorities, improving commitment levels, and possibly increasing the likelihood of employment duration. Such participation would also effectively close the door on the common critique that "we just don't matter around here" that was so common in the narrative responses in this research.

Such a shift in focus will present challenges in terms of cultural perceptions of empowerment noted in this research. The role of local staff in decision-making needs to be clearly defined and understood. In the case of those wanting hierarchy, such responsibility may not be fully internalized. Hoon Nam and Wie Han's 2005 analysis of such a situation shows that some staff members might be nervous contributing to something outside of their fixed employment position. Changing from a command-and-control to a lead-and-support model may make some uncomfortable in a position that calls for leadership from multiple organizational levels. A management strategy of empowerment emphasizing participative decision making may also be seen as weak and ineffectual in more vertical cultures. Navigating such areas won't be easy, and it certainly can't be accomplished if American supervisors simply retreat to their cultural comfort zone.

There is precedent, however, for empowerment management based on cultural understanding. In studies of organizations where the construction of participative power and decision-making was different among members, Shipper et al. (2003) found:

The results indicate that the relationship between self-awareness and effectiveness needs to be explored controlling for culture. It appears that in low power distance cultures . . . self-awareness of interactive skills may be crucial relative to effectiveness whereas in high power distance cultures such as Malaysia, self-awareness of controlling skills may be crucial relative to effectiveness. These findings follow from Hofstede's suggestion that different cultures value different managerial behaviors. Thus, the need for self-awareness of different managerial skills varies by culture (189).

Responsive and aware managers understand that in some cultures, management must make an effort to clarify the rationale for a new program. In others, a greater focus needs to be placed on making the expected performance clear. Although challenging, putting in the effort to understand

has enormous benefits. When explained in a culturally appropriate way, empowerment can improve workplace morale across all cultures. What's important, however, is that an organization must invest effort in understanding the local staff in conjunction with providing more opportunities to shape the direction of the organization.

Understandably, when local staff engage in more organizational decision making, it will follow that additional promotion and advancement positions need to come with the increased responsibility. This presents a substantial challenge to maintaining sustained organizational commitment on the part of local staff. Policy for an American organization is typically centralized in the United States. In the case of the State Department, it will come, at least principally, from Washington with an expectation that American officers are accountable for enacting programs. Thus, there will always be an institutional hierarchy, regardless of the level of empowerment that is given to local staff in carrying out policy. As such, there will be a clear and visible ceiling for non-American employees, with most key positions of power still squarely held by Americans. For those who are ambitious, this barrier could ultimately be what prevents long tenure with the organization. Similar situations exist in other American organizations operating abroad. With that in mind, finding meaningful opportunities for advancement must be a priority for the local staff. This will obviously be different based on unique organizational structures. However it would be folly to ignore this situation and not seek solutions. This process begins when the organization considers responses like the one encountered in this research:

The nature of local employment is such that long-term career opportunities are not readily available . . . working here means doing one position for life or leaving. When I leave, it will not be from lack of loyalty, but because at some point, the work has been accomplished and it is time to move on.

If a valuable and contributing member of the team has such a viewpoint, how can the organizational structure for local staff be adapted to ensure continued motivation? Without providing advancement opportunities, years of experience and the investment in extensive training will walk out the door every few years and the organization will be forced to re-invest the same or more resources to have an employee of equal competence. The entire process is costly, inefficient, and damaging to the organizational mission.

Recommendation: Combined Trainings for Americans and Local Staff

A consistent call by respondents was for an increase in the amount of training for local staff. This is hardly surprising since much of the world views training and education with a great deal of prestige. Training serves numerous valuable functions for an organization beyond improving efficiency and skills. Training has been found to improve organizational commitment, build up internal networks, increase knowledge sharing, and develop a climate of team building and shared organizational ownership. Such items would be important for any organization but are especially relevant for a multinational.

In the case of the State Department, training is largely separated between American and non-American staff. Training services for American supervisors largely originates in Washington. For local staff, there's a network of training centers, online courses, and onsite courses devoted to non-American employees. While segmentation between Americans and local staff is not official policy, it is, in many ways, the de facto reality. Similar divisions in training are likely systemic for many American organizations operating abroad. Creating courses that incorporate both American supervisors and non-American staff would allow the knowledge sharing and team-building functions of training to stretch across the divide between each group. It could also develop greater opportunities for discussion of work-related issues in a safe context.

There would be some challenges intrinsic to such combined trainings. Specifically, facilitating the participation of non-Americans in discussion would be hard absent cultural considerations. Americans would certainly contribute, but non-American staff may feel pressure to just agree if an American is in a supervisory position. This is doubly true if the local staff come from a culture that values deference to authority. In short, the focus of such courses needs to be explicit in the call for equal participation from all sides. For the course to be successful, the opportunity for mutual development must be understood by everyone. The end result could be that training serves not only to improve skill sets: it could be the basis for building bridges across the organizational divide.

Recommendation Summary

Business gurus have built a lucrative empire of snake oil and one-size-fits-all solutions. When dealing with a challenge as multifaceted as the

international workforce, simple solutions and quick fixes are almost always inadequate. That said, appropriately adapting these recommendations can be the foundation of a dynamic and successful international organization. Ensuring that American supervisors are more culturally aware would improve performance and reduce the likelihood of unfortunate incidents like those found in this research. Creating structures that utilize local expertise and empower local staff to take action would make for a more adaptable and internationally successful organization. As noted, internationalization is not something accomplished in the short term. American staff need to be in country long enough to grasp local nuances, and they need to be evaluated from all levels of the organization. The desegregation of training and development would also do a lot to bridge the gap between Americans and non-Americans. None of these solutions are quick and easy. The voices of the international workforce offered in this book, however, show that the stakes are clear. Building an inclusive organization that leverages its strength, or building a distant organization that invites the withdrawal of the constituency it needs most.

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CHAPTER 9

E Unum Pluribus

In 2005, I was fortunate enough to work with the State Department on improving organizational communication for the embassy in Kigali, Rwanda. For the State Department, the embassy's diverse staff and extensive outreach programs were intended to display American support for the region and post-genocide Rwanda. Unfortunately, lingering grievances and cultural tensions had compromised staff effectiveness. I was brought in to conduct trainings, interviews, and workshops designed to help mediate the miscommunication and animus that had become palpable in the workplace. It was this experience, along with my spectacular failure in helping to solve the organization's cultural tensions that sparked my interest in studying the challenge of working for Americans.

My American contacts informed me that the greatest challenges they were facing related to staffing. Deep divisions among the ethnically diverse local staff had compromised the organizational mission. Past grievances among groups had contributed to an atmosphere of resentment and secrecy that undermined the goal of a representative and integrated workplace. Beyond internal local tensions, cultural differences and mistrust created serious difficulties between the Rwandans and their American supervisors. To help remedy these items, I conducted staff interviews, facilitated team-building exercises, and organized conflict role-playing scenarios. All the exercises were both fun and apparently well received. Internal evaluation from fifty employees gave me a 3.8 on a 4-point effectiveness scale. It was only later that I became aware that these were problems not easily remedied by a group scavenger hunt.

Employee evaluations after my intervention showed no performance improvements and lingering issues related to organizational and cultural communication. Sessions like the ones I facilitated had routinely worked on Americans, even in hostile groups. What was different here? The answer

is simple. Building an intercultural organization isn't something you can accomplish through a program with limited duration and scope. Inclusion, understanding, and empowerment all have to be part of an organization's DNA. In my experience in Rwanda, there was much enthusiasm for understanding cultural differences. Building on that understanding requires much more. Program effectiveness was further damaged because of power imbalances in participating members. My immediate supervisors in this project were high-ranking American staff. They had requested the chance to participate in group activities and in open communication sessions. As a contractor who was directly accountable to these supervisors, I concurred with their wishes despite serious concerns. American supervisors in Rwanda participated with the very people they supervised. What's worse, the character of their participation included an element of evaluation of the things said by Rwandan employees. Openness was lost and non-American staff began performing according to perceived expectations rather than engaging with their American colleagues. I vowed that I wouldn't let such a scenario happen again. In the time since, I worked with organizations on creating a safe space for understanding cultural difference. The purpose of this book has been to provide the perspective of non-American employees; to understand both their frustrations and aspirations in working for an American organization.

Having offered a window into that perspective and considered recommendations based on the experiences of this non-American workforce, it's important to conclude with some thoughts and guidelines that serve as a point of entry in the international conversation. For example, Soo (2012) recommends five strategies for American organizations looking to move abroad. First, creating a culturally successful organization starts at the recruitment stage. Seek out candidates with broad cultural experience and give value to cultural literacy as a skill set in the hiring process. When hiring abroad, work with people in the community and experts on the culture in structuring recruiting. Second, make successful multicultural management an important part of retention and promotion. Multiculturalism can't just be a decorative vase for the organization. When people who are good at it are compensated, more people will work hard to get good at it. Third, provide training and development opportunities that allow members of the organization to improve at intercultural interaction. Fourth, embed a multicultural perspective throughout all levels of organizational management. Finally, use the insights gained from the organization's culturally diverse conversation. When non-American

staff offer perspective into the local experience, those ideas need to count. When cultural interaction is inherent to organizational interaction, strategies can better match the needs of an international organization.

In my own training and consultation work, I've created the acronym "CULTURE" that encompasses many of the important concepts for creating a culturally aware organization. While making an acronym for anything can seem childish and slightly forced, I've found this to be an effective way of keeping key ideas organized and making them memorable:

- Common Ground
- Understand the importance of culture
- Look beyond the superficial
- Tolerate ambiguity
- Utilize patience and persistence
- Recognize your cultural bias
- Empathize and show respect

First and foremost, recognizing common ground is fundamental in an intercultural organization. While cultural differences have been thoroughly noted throughout this book, a starting point for an intercultural discussion can be the discovery of what people agree on. People everywhere want to feel successful, safe, appreciated, and trusted. Talking about the organization in terms of shared values can make the tensions created by difference seem more manageable. Those differences, however, can't be ignored or wished away. A second step for effective intercultural communication in an organization is to acknowledge and explore cultural differences. These differences should not be confused with superficial items. For example, I'm married to a non-American. My birthday fell on a visit to my spouse's home country. We went out to dinner with dozens of friends and family. At the end of the meal, however, I was appalled when I received the check for everyone's food and drinks. Coming from the United States, I was under the impression that I would be treated on my birthday. Apparently, the custom works in reverse elsewhere: "The birthday kid" is expected to treat the friends. After a moment of grumbling, I realized that the outcome of both systems is exactly the same. It's not a source of true cultural division—sometimes you still eat free and sometimes you still get the bill. It just involves having a little perspective. That perspective comes from developing a tolerance for ambiguity, utilizing persistence in understanding how things work. All of this is only possible when you can

recognize your own cultural bias. When you find yourself saying that a culture is crazy or flawed, it might be time to consider how your own cultural expectations have given you that perspective. Finally, when you are able to do all of these things, the result will be that you can show empathy to people from outside your experience. You are frequently just as strange to them as they are to you. Thinking beyond one's own experience is the basis of respect. And respect is at the heart of intercultural interaction.

Frederick (2011) furthers such insights by outlining the most common mistakes made by American organizations attempting to internationalize. One of the most common miscalculations is the belief that taking an organization abroad can be accomplished quickly. Researcher and international consultant Jonathon Fink sums up this fallacy by stating:

That's where a lot of companies go wrong. They get on a plane, fly out there, and then expect to make a deal and come right back home. That's not how it works. They have to trust you before they'll do business with you . . . Internationalizing can take as much as several months before one can make a rational decision. Too often one sees a company make a quick trip and a gut reaction to go international (Frederick 2011).

Another mistake that relates to much of the content in this book is the danger of arrogance for Americans building an organization overseas. Frederick notes:

Just because you're successful . . . in the United States, don't assume that you will be immediately welcomed and received by bankers, lawyers, and accountants in another country. It will be more like you're eighteen years old without any experience again. You won't automatically be given credit. Many times people mistakenly expect that the red carpet will be rolled out for them when they arrive, and they tend to be surprised when it isn't (Frederick 2011).

Related to this is a belief in the value of American advice. The idea that "this is how things are supposed to be" can stifle internationalization before it even gets started. As noted, there's a tendency to view the world through the lens of one's cultural experience. That is what makes the integration of local perspectives so crucial. Consider this scenario:

You've finally closed the deal, after exhausting both your patience and time. Now two weeks later, Russian officials are asking for special considerations that change the terms of the agreement.

The immediate reaction from an American cultural perspective would be to cry foul play. A contract is something that is set in stone. Changing a contract or failing to live up to one is, at best, dishonorable and, at worst, illegal. It's important to note, however, that many places in the world view the concept of a contract much differently. For much of the West, a contract is the conclusion to negotiation. Elsewhere, a contract is viewed less concretely and is better understood in relational terms. The relationship will evolve based on circumstances and so will the contract. Knowing this ahead of time would radically change how one approaches agreements. Retreating to an American view, rather than engaging outside perspectives, creates an information disadvantage.

As this book has shown in the population studied, such a disadvantage is hardly hypothetical. Moreover, current research has confirmed this point. Companies go international with poor preparation, limited knowledge of the local conditions, weak integration of the international workforce, and inflexible structures that don't match the situation on the ground. Dewhurst et al. (2011) identified the concept a "globalization penalty," which suggests that these factors have created a performance tax on an organization when it expands abroad. Their analysis is based on McKinsey's organizational-health index database, which contains the results of surveys of more than 600,000 employees who assessed the health of nearly 500 different corporations. The results for most organizations attempting to internationalize are staggering.

- Global organizations are consistently less effective at setting a shared vision and engaging employees around it.
- Global organizations find maintaining professional standards and encouraging innovation of all kinds more difficult.
- Global organizations find it more challenging than local organizations do to build government and community relationships and business partnerships.

In the context of the non-American workforce examined in this research, such results are hardly surprising. In fact, they seem to directly mirror the experiences of local staff in the U.S. State Department. Follow-up interviews conducted by Dewhurst's team (2012) confirm that the problems seen by this population are being experienced by American companies throughout the world:

Many of the executives we interviewed believed strongly that the vast reserves of skills, knowledge, and experience within the global workforce of their companies represented an invaluable asset. But making the most of that asset is difficult: for example, few surveyed executives felt that their companies were good at transferring lessons learned . . . Barely half the executives at the global companies we studied in depth thought they were effective at tailoring recruiting, retention, training, and development processes for different geographies . . . one global company told us that “our current process favors . . . U.S. culture. The process is not designed to select for people who understand (the local) market.”

Again, such failure in the ability to integrate and empower local talent is not going unnoticed by non-Americans working for American organizations. One non-American respondent in Dewhurst’s survey echoed this sentiment by stating he would soon seek out an organization that “can offer more senior roles in the home market” (Dewhurst et al. 2012).

Perhaps, as some argue, all of this research points to a deeper truth about the duality of the American character that has profound implications for its international interactions. America proclaims itself as a land of immigrants, ignoring the sizeable population that was displaced by its founding. Through the metaphor of a melting pot, America has long argued that the unique ethnic character that each culture brings when it arrives in the country shapes the flavor of the whole. Through the years and over generations, the old identity is gradually lost, leaving only the label of the previous tradition. There are self-identified Italian Americans who speak not one word of the language. Many Americans celebrate their Polish heritage while remaining completely ignorant of the goings on in “the old country.” Students on a short excursion to Europe or Asia may come back with what they project as a meaningful understanding of the cultures they visited.

Perhaps this “culture as costume” and “culture as custom” view has created an overly optimistic perception that “They” are not so different than “Us” and that understanding is easy. Perhaps in this context, it’s understandable why the State Department broadcasts a policy of engagement with the world and appreciation for its local workforce—the concept of difference has not fully been internalized by much of American culture. This could speak to a number of questionable beliefs including the assumption that the world wants their economies and institutions to mirror those of the United States. This core belief, that cultural difference is not significant enough to be a priority, could be at the foundation

of organizations that behave as though the world wants—and should want—to be American. Within the microcosm of the State Department, the duality of the American conception of difference comes to the fore: local staff are *not like us* but we can assume that they are *exactly like us*.

Culture pulls people in different directions. It twists and turns people. It can make a catastrophically stupid decision seem completely rational based entirely on one's cultural orientation. It shapes time. It alters the perception of space. It creates problems that one group tries to solve, while another group simply tries to manage. It is ugly and beautiful. It can inspire the basest instincts and uplift the best human impulses. In short, how we see the world affects how the world will see us. Until culture is viewed as a fundamental part of the epistemology of organizations, communities, and individuals, the full understanding of decisions and the motivation for those decisions will be impossible.

So what makes working for Americans so difficult? The answer won't come from more talking. It can only be found when we start to listen.

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APPENDIX

Voices of a Non-American Workforce

This appendix provides the full text of the narrative responses to the survey distributed to foreign service nationals in the U.S. State Department. Throughout the book, a number of themes in these responses were identified. I believe that these themes are well supported in the text of stories given by this non-American workforce. There is, however, a level of presumption and subjectivity in my reading of their perspectives. With that in mind, I've provided all of the responses of this important and very representative group of employees. I encourage everyone to look at the responses themselves. In doing so, you might find additional themes worth considering. For practitioners, scholars, students, and interested readers, these stories can inform policy, research, and perspectives. These people work closely with the highest levels of American power in the State Department. Knowing their impressions of the American workplace can offer insight into American foreign policy, intercultural communication, and the internationalization of U.S. institutions.

Copy editing and editorial changes to clarify these statements were made in quotations from this material in previous sections of the book. Please note that here the grammar, style, and punctuation of respondents were generally maintained to fully preserve the authenticity of survey responses.

Some questions worth considering as you peruse these statements include:

- What themes do you see emerging in these responses?
- What types of responses would be of greatest concern to an American organization operating abroad?
- What responses would be most likely to hinder organizational effectiveness?

- Which responses suggest a high level of satisfaction with the working environment?
- How do certain responses mirror the stereotypes much of the world has about the United States?
- For responses indicating problems with the workplace, what solutions would work best remedying these problems?

Survey Question: Please write any follow-up information regarding your views on management/supervision, your employment with the U.S. State Department or other U.S. organization, or your opinions in relation to any question in this survey:

1. I get the respect I am looking for, happy with salary, emotionally stable in my job.
2. I have always felt like there are “us” (FSN’s) and “them” (American officers).
3. Given that I work in the public affairs, most of the management (or mismanagement) issues stem from the reality that the USIA was folded in to the State Department ushering in a variety of changes to the way the U.S. conducts public affairs outreach abroad.
4. Would recommend that ALL U.S. supervisors be more attentive to problems regarding ALL their staff and be more fair in the treatment reserved to them in matter of evaluation, consideration and respect.
5. American supervision is very poor. The Department of state has no feeling to deal with FSNs and the main policy is “WE DO NOT CARE”. There is very less long term planning. The longest period is 1 1/2 years. No views, no long term decisions. No American officer cares what happens after his 3 year tour.
6. The survey confuses the organization and local US managers. The organization has excellent goals and is an excellent one. The problem areas are the local US staff who are most of the time focus on, empire building, lifestyle management and advancement of the individual career and not the US Government long term interests!
7. I started working for the U.S. Mission right after I finished my education 29 years ago. I just don’t have an idea what it might be like to have a different employer. The relationship with our American supervisors relies heavily on the personality and work style of our supervisors and is therefore subject to change every three years.

Some of them do involve the FSNs and some of them don't. Each of them has a personal work style. Accordingly, the flow of communication is at times really good sometimes there are periods when it is not. These are the results of having watched American officers come and go over many years.

8. I like the fact that team spirit is encouraged in our organization. I think that in organization supervision it is important to involve subordinates in the decision making process. At the same time there are cases when decisions should be made in authoritative manner.
9. My time with the State Department has generally been positive. But in recent years there have been incidents of dishonesty (skimming funds for personal use), turning a blind eye to bad practices (such as putting mail of departed officers in the garbage instead of taking time to forward), and the policy has been to ignore these practices. One appalling incident was giving a high-caliber award to a very bad officer to help (him/her) get a new posting when (he/she) has had no responses to new-post applications. This person hardly shows up at work. That made everyone in the local organization feel extremely disillusioned and cynical. Fortunately the OIG visited post and semi-addressed some of these issues. I see the value of the OIG after witnessing events in the past few years. At least it offers SOME safeguards but if management policy is to ignore wrongdoings the attitude among FSNs is that Americans will do anything, ignore everything, to protect their own. This does not foster a good workplace.
10. It is very difficult to project your stay where there is very little room for growth. Good supervisors come and go and so do their recognition of your job. There should be some plan for professional advancement for FSN's.
11. Since I have been with the Embassy (a little less than 5 years), I have noticed the huge gap between Americans and Foreign Service Nationals. FSNs tend to serve in the missions for many years, so there is a lot of loyalty, and in the past, there was a greater prestige to working with the Mission. In the recent years, at our Post, FSNs have become increasingly displeased with the poor salary adjustments that we have been given. They have not reached to half of the annual inflation rates. Morale among the FSN population is very low. And Management can't seem to do much to improve it. I have heard it over and over again from the FSNs who have been here for

more than 15 years—things are very different now, and not for the better. Management is always telling the FSNs that we are the glue that hold things together for the Missions abroad, and that we are the ones that keep things running. I don't think FSNs at our Post feel that we are being appreciated as such. I am involved in the local FSN association. I have noticed how different management styles can make a difference in employee relations. In dealing with upper Management, the management style of the Joint Management Officer is a key factor. We are very fortunate to have an exceptional JMO currently at our Post. But at the same time, we are also very aware that he is exceptional—he is not the “rule”. Within the Mission, the people that work with USAID are, in general, more motivated than those of us working for the Department of State. Of places to work (after many years of managing my own business), the Embassy was my first choice, and I was fortunate enough to get a job offer after my third attempt. I was overqualified for the job I got, but I chose to place a foot in the door, knowing that you can make a career out of working for the Embassy. Once you are in, you realize that there really isn't much room for growth—or at least, that is the case at our Post. I think that finding the motivation to outdo yourself in your job depends a lot on your supervisors. We can't really look at it as an opportunity for promotion because there really aren't promotions here. You can compete for a job opening with everybody within and outside the Mission. There is no sense of community at our Post. Americans don't really associate much with FSNs, and we have also learned to keep our distance. Truth be told, FSNs are like third class citizens among the community. First the American officers, then the officer family members and then the FSNs.

12. State Department is a huge bureaucratic organization. Being at post we do sometimes feel like part of the family but when certain regulations come from DC this feeling is usually gone. This happens due to the different realities in DC and at posts.
13. Some of the answers are related to my feelings towards the current Administration. The answers would have been different if you had asked the questions 8 years ago. Please also appreciate the fact that we (even as FSNs) are not encouraged to discuss too much about this organization and our job with people outside due to security concern. This actually has a subtle impact on how emotionally/personally attached we can be to this organization.

14. As an FSN /w more than 9 years working for State sometimes it's really hard to work with many types of bosses, since they just come and go every 2 or 3–4 years. We have to start everything all over again. Everyone (new managers) wants to show their power, their skills, but sometimes it just does not make any sense.
15. I like this survey because I send my views.
16. I've really enjoyed doing the public affairs work for the U.S. Government for the past 16 years, and I hope to continue working at the current post during the rest of my career until the mandatory retirement age.
17. Despite the congenial environment the organization offers, there should be more scopes for promotions and recognition. Officers often lose sight of the consistent high quality output of the FSNs. Awards, incentives should be offered generously to deserving FSNs. Otherwise it will generate work fatigue and frustration among FSNs.
18. As we know two persons can never be of the same disposition or mentality, or of the same caliber, so it's natural that the relation between the supervisor and the employee can never be the same. Every supervisor does have his own style of works. We the employees have to act accordingly. Sometimes we enjoy such change of taste, but sometimes it hurts us. Close friendly relationship with supervisors engenders enthusiasm to perform better and job satisfaction in employees' hearts leading to better atmosphere of works. But it does not always happen.
19. My answers to some of the questions depends. For instance, when asked if I feel like family to this organization, sometimes I do and other times I don't. I've had some rough experience with a very few Americans and that was mainly personality issue of the individuals. Generally speaking, I enjoy my work in the Public Affairs Section.
20. In most of the questions I marked neither agree or disagree because it depends on the administration at the time. Here I mean what the Ambassador wants is what Officers will tell us to do and also it will depend if the Officer is not strong enough to challenge and guide the Ambassador we end up doing things we shouldn't be doing. Also age of supervisors matters—young officers care for their promotions—whereas old supervisors guide the organization and care for the welfare of their staff.
21. I like working at this institution because they give us a space to be creative, and be supportive to any innovative ideas to enhance the

quality of the “product” we are manufacturing within the regulations and laws spectrum and to achieve mission objectives.

22. Management/Supervision style change every three years with the change of officers in the Embassy. Local employees have to adapt to these changes. Not many State Department officers are really good managers as many of them aspire for promotion during their three-year assignments and will do only things which they think will help them get promoted. All managers should undergo a people skills course, especially those who supervise local employees, such as those in General Services and Public Diplomacy. Cultural Diplomacy begins at the workplace such as an Embassy. What works in one country will not necessarily work in another. Cultural sensitivity is very important. Bad managers result in the Ugly American image.
23. In my 8-year career with 3 organizations, the State Department is the only organization that rewards innovation, and hard work through various incentives. I value competition and this is the most ideal work environment for me. The organizational values are also ideal for my country and supervisors appreciate any kind of interventions that reflect these values.
24. The nature of FSN employment is such that long-term career opportunities are not readily available and as such, employees should be encouraged to grow and develop to both benefit State but also in order to have skilled workers that move to new careers after a few years. I have had the opportunity to do both as I have been fortunate to have great management that has also given me the opportunity to train and develop and then supported me when I wanted to serve in Iraq, where I was given even greater opportunities. When I came home, that was recognized and I have been able to move into a much more senior position. For most FSNs, working for the State means doing one position for life or leaving. When I leave, it will not be from lack of loyalty, but because at some point, the work has been accomplished and it is time to move on. Realizing that FSNs like American Officers want career development and the ability to develop and move on, is an integral part in recruiting and maintaining the very best, while keeping the organization vibrant, creative and flexible to changing needs and world developments. I saw this particularly in Iraq where ‘long-serving’ means that you have been there for more than a year, and that is not always a bad thing. I am critical of employee evaluation as it emphasizes the abstract work and not the

individual performing it which means that a mediocre-performing staff may, possibly, receive a greater reward simply by reason of that position description than someone who performs outstanding. Places where labor is cheap will have higher-ranked FSNs than places where skill, independence and responsibility are key individual requirements. Overall, State is an excellent employer, often paying more than market-comparative salaries and with many benefits, it is rewarding and challenging and for me, it is an opportunity do something no private company could do or offer. I believe that, without change or growth, an ideal time to stay in a position is no more than 3–5 years depending on the skill required to perform it, similar to a posting. In some countries, the State may be a life-long service and some people will stay all life, but for most of today's workforce, the ideal is to come in, do a great job and move on when the maximum has been reached, and I am very thankful for having this opportunity to hopefully do so for something I believe in. Also, thank you for the opportunity to submit some of my views on this matter.

25. I think this organization provides a good example of the US democracy and, above all, of what “you can do for your country”. I share many points of view in way it is managed (strict control over the way money is spent, for example). Obviously, there are also things that after 25 years I have learned and which are not completely positive. Sometimes personnel/managing problems tend to be postponed indefinitely as the American officer in charge knows s/he will be leaving soon and is not willing to take on the burden of difficult decisions.
26. A lot depends on a particular supervisor and/or higher management of the mission. The overall feeling is that at present general interest in keeping good employees is going down as compared with the situation a decade ago.
27. Most of the time supervisors do not care about evaluation. Either they don't have time to review/work on it, or they just ignore it. Supervisors sometimes make a big difference between FSNs while they should treat them equally. Most of the supervisors do not have knowledge of the language and culture of the host country which make it difficult to deal with FSNs and the mission contacts.
28. It is kind of tricky to give realistic views on management as everything depends on the American officers. Some are effective and have good management skills whereas some are completely out of the

scheme and would not integrated their environment. So the morale or the loyalty of a local employee depends on who is in control. There are also situations where officers are too weak to manage a deficient employee. This lack of authority is seen by hard working FSNs as a sign of mismanagement.

29. In general the management/supervision is fine. But sometimes, a “strong/wrong character” can make the difference. It is great if a boss is a normal person, with challenging requests, but if the boss is not sure of what he wants, then it is a completely different situation. And what bothers me most is micro-management, and moody bosses. We know our job, contacts, and we are loyal. My basic motto is to present America in the best possible light whenever, wherever, and I am proud to be able to do this in normal circumstances.
30. This survey reflects views from the FSN point of view. Some questions seemed even irrelevant to me, due to way hierarchy organized within the embassy system.
31. US diplomats come here and have very limited managerial skills, and even more, they lack the willingness to take decisions that might have a negative impact on FSNs. But this “all and each of you are the best” does damage morale of high performers.
32. 1. The first 6 questions are especially interesting. 2. Questions 7–29 focused on employee loyalty/attachment to the organization is a little too much. 3. Working with the State department in the Field is very interesting and exiting but FSNs sometime encounter huge challenges due to working with American Officers who lack some managerial skills in handling work/people or sometimes not culturally sensitive/informed or misinformed. 4. In relation to question 4, 99 percent of American Officers/managers at the post where I belong avoid off-the-job social contact with employees which make is incomplete experience.
33. Working for the Public Affairs section of State is unlike working for most other organizations. Only employment in the diplomatic service of one’s own country or in a multi-national organization like the UN would be comparable. In my view working here offers a wide range of professional and personal opportunities which one needs to seize and not to allow some of the administrative, management, ideological and hierarchical constraints to limit one’s possibilities of what in my experience has been an extraordinarily interesting and varied job.

34. The down fall of working in this organization is the continuous change of officers every one or two years. We have difficult times in transition periods. However, good officers/managers keep their marks and lasting memories, and memories of not so good ones are often forgotten.
35. In Embassies, American officers stay generally for 2 to three years. This means that management styles change every 2 or three years. Management involves science (objective aspects) and personality (subjective aspects) and the challenge for the us is to have the intelligence to adapt to every management style. This is like human life. It is not easy all the time.
36. There should be more training opportunities both for FSNs and Supervisors. As much as possible, FSNs and Supervisors should jointly participate in training sessions on critical issues relating to their job.
37. I haven't had many officers who cares about FSN. I am under a FSN supervision and I do feel annoyed by it. My supervisor does not care about the job I do.
38. The locally employed staff in my post has been so distressed by the humiliation and discrimination from management and American Officers. Newly appointed American Officers do not value the long experience of the local staff; they ignore the knowledge provided to them and treat them with superiority. As for the questions, the answers should have included other options.
39. As employees of this organization we feel that we are discriminated and humiliated by some of our supervisors and managers and not treated well. I'd like to take this opportunity to suggest that officers before they join the organization should receive an intensive management course on how to treat and work with their staff in human way and try to learn from them not to attack them and benefit from their experience, also to ask their opinion and share with them their thoughts and plans. We are working here for the benefit of the U.S. government, therefore, we need our performance to be appreciated and rewarded. Not to be humiliated.
40. My management and supervision views depend on the managers and the supervisors themselves . . . I am cannot talk in terms of organization but in terms of human relations, the relation to the organization depends on your relation to the people you work with. Moreover, the fact that supervisors and managers change frequently

makes it difficult to be attached to the organization. In addition other businesses mainly oil companies offer much better job opportunities in my area, the fact that makes me think about leaving the embassy for another better salary, in an international environment and training opportunities.

41. There are very, very limited opportunities for the career development. The longer you work, the less they are. Loyalty is not appreciated here.
42. I worked for a French embassy for about 3 years. When I compare the two systems, I prefer the American way of doing things: employees are given the trust and opportunity to perform their duties the best way they think it should be done.
43. American officers do not seek guidance from FSN supervisors or employees; they tend to believe that by being who they are they do not have to request information from a local national. They act rude to their fellow FSNs and sometime discriminatory behavior is perceived. The statement “if it comes from an FSN employee does not count” is very common in this atmosphere.
44. FSN’s should become more training. FSN’s should be able to take the FSI online language courses.
45. Most of them really do not care about you. if it is in their best interest or to keep other people happy they can and will either make or break you Often they do not follow up promises and do not do anything about situations among us.
46. Supervisors often lack good management/people skills. Local hires are treated as staff more often than as colleagues. Sometimes American supervisors try too hard to be “friends” with subordinates. Credit is too often claimed for work completed by or initiated by a subordinate.
47. While Americans have superb analytical and drafting skills, management and leadership can be a challenge for some. The State Department should do more to assist senior officers to grow in their managerial capabilities and move up from being team members to becoming team leaders.
48. Local practice is not always adhered to.
49. State should remove the word “management” from its organization chart and telephone book until it implements basic principles. The “kiss up and kick down” culture just doesn’t work, and our almost

complete failure to prioritize goals and objectives, coupled with a failure to pursue the necessary resources to accomplish even basic tasks, is stifling.

50. I have currently served 12 years with State and they have all been enjoyable in the most part. However, I feel that the lack of money at certain posts to enhance employees' capabilities to perform in their roles is now becoming increasingly obvious. I travel frequently as part of my employment and seeing other regions and their spending capabilities due to more funding from State than what is received in Euros is extremely frustrating. Training budgets should be more uniform across the globe. We have not had any money in our Embassy training budget for two years now—this is really unacceptable for any organization, if they expect to get the best from their employees—extremely short sighted!
51. All good!
52. I work for 27+ years with the Department of State, 22+ years in a supervisory position, I'm dealing with the public day by day representing the Department of State—I'm proud to be a member and know that my work and how I perform has a little influence on the overall Austrian/U.S. relations.
53. The one downside with working at the State Department is that some officers believe that they are superior than FSNs, or at least treat us in a condescending way that makes us feel that.
54. I feel that it is extremely important that American officers talk to their employees to check not only how but also why they perform their duties in a certain way. Empathy is really important.
55. I was sexually touched in a humiliating and public way by a supervisor. Two American Officers were there when this happened. They said nothing and only joked about it when I brought it up later. I think they know this totally, completely is harassment but they want no involvement. If there is an investigation, it could go against their records and hurt their chance for a promotion or better post. They think "the stupid FSN will keep her mouth shut and make no problems . . ." This happens A LOT on many issues. They don't care about us—only their careers. I have an advanced university diploma—do they ever treat me like I have something to offer? NO! The day I leave this place with my pride will be one of the best days of my life.

56. Thank you for the survey.
57. If to compare with previous years now the embassy has lost its “good public image”. Although it is widely known that many issues depend on personalities, their management style and behavior in public, current supervisors neither have skills nor wish to better know the country. In such situation when there are “We Americans, and you FSNs”, it is really hard to work and compete with EU funding and their programs.
58. Americans usually talk down to locally employed staff and have an arrogant view towards the host country. The Ambassador is very distant at my post and has old values and ways of managing. It says a lot that she can call me by my nickname even if I never gave her permission for that but I have to call her by her title and stand up for her every time she enters a room, every day for three years. I believe you earn respect but nobody not even the Ambassador gets it for having people stand up for her.
59. I personally feel that over the years our embassy has been mismanaged. Due to management decision the communication/understanding between American and local employees has become very distant. Communication, understanding and mutual benefit is key to building the bridges and I hope that management becomes more aware of this. Although my values are equal to those of Americans and I take proud in the work that I do and how I do it, management decision “sometimes” lead me to thing “what am I doing here”. Thank you for your efforts and I wish you all the success.
60. It is very difficult to work with Ambassadors who are political appointees. In some cases they do not realize what position they carry and that they did not come for touring a beautiful country only but to represent the United States of America. The staff sees very clearly who is who.
61. I strongly believe that there should be a continuity line when officers are transferred. I mean that many times when a new officer is assigned at post, all the work done by his/her predecessor was wrong and everything starts over again every two or three years. I understand that changes are good when they mean improvement, not just for the sake of changing or doing things your own way. This is many times the cause of frustration to foreign employees (together with the saying “in my previous post”) and why organizations can’t grow on a solid base. Thank you for valuing our opinion.

62. I feel that Teamwork is a strong method of work it has been practiced within this organization along these years. Likewise, leadership shown by the current and former American Direct Hired Staff has strongly joined the sense of belonging to this organization as a family. Important is this initiative of providing more training in professional development skills to the U.S. Government employees that will certainly improve the U.S. Mission towards to a high performance organization.
63. I am happy to work with U.S. State Department and hope to continue so. Still there is a family after the working hours to enjoy.
64. Supervisors and their management styles change in the course of the years. But lately, communication and being informed of what is going on has become more of a problem despite all information and communication technologies in place.
65. The breach between U.S. employees and FSN is very wide and I do not see a serious effort on the part of management to improve the situation. We seem to be an after-thought or a necessary evil to most American managers who pay lip service to the idea of employee integration. I feel the situation is even more difficult as I am considered “neither here nor there”. In addition, the fact that, I am subject to full U.S. taxes, but my status as FSN also requires me to pay full local taxes means that my net income after taxes is around 40% of my gross—a situation that I was NOT apprised of when I was offered the position. I feel that I am somehow being punished for working for my own government. My direct supervisor at mission are sympathetic to my situation, but are unable to really help. When I presented the issue to the Director General’s office, the response I eventually got was less than satisfying (yes, you are liable for both taxes and, as the country you reside doesn’t have a tax treaty with the U.S., nothing can be done.) Needless to say, the situation doesn’t make my current position my “dream job”. That being said, while I’m here, I try to do the best job I can.
66. The management situation varies extremely with turnover. Characters, styles and opinions can be very different, which sometimes makes it hard, since the direction the mission/department was heading is changing along—sometimes with extreme consequence.
67. After 9 year working for the Embassy, I know, that our supervisors do not know in detail, what the people are doing. To get a higher salary, “is important to sell myself”, instead to work as best as I

know. In general, I enjoy my work, I am happy to work for the Embassy, but I think that the salary system is not fair.

68. It is sometimes frustrating to get new boss every 2 years, especially since your knowledge base is really huge and bosses are juniors. However it is great when your boss is not the best one and when he/she is due to leave. Also micromanagement in this organization is difficult to deal with since normally micromanagers do not know much about process and they slow it down.
69. I feel a great gratitude with the US Embassy in Bogota. My work performance in these 31 years has been outstanding and I have been very lucky with the American Supervisors I have worked with. Unfortunately my grade was frozen around 15 years ago and I have not had an step increase during all these years and the salary increase has been very low in the last 3 years, so my salary has become lower in terms of the annual salary necessary for living in Colombia. I hope my next supervisor will help me next year.
70. I don't agree with the actual management/supervision in my Section. Unfortunately I don't feel respected and much appreciated, it hurts and it's very disappointing. This affects my morale and my view of the Embassy which I've always idealized.
71. Being a part of the consular section staff for over 13 years, having started with one American officer and two local staff, I have enjoyed my employment basically due to the management/supervision attitudes. Now there are 3 American officers and 3 local staff (plus one frozen position) at the consular section which adds to the management issue and provides a different perspective. We have been blessed by the consular officers during all this time and I have always valued the respect, trust and friendly working relationships we have been and are in. I still believe that basic decisions have to be made by the supervisors but different opinions might help to make the right decision. Most of the job requirements cannot be questioned and are set very clearly but there are many things which can be decided inside the section with everybody involved.
72. I am working about 24 years for my Embassy and I had bad/regular opinion about the attitude of two direct supervisors, they made my working life very unhappy.
73. All in all I'm very satisfied with the organization and employer/employee relations, however, there's always an issue of personalities—good or bad—as in any other organization. At times, policies do not

“protect” subordinates from bad managers. Yet I have been lucky thus far with mostly good managers. In my 17-year career I only once had a bad manager. Also, to my opinion, State would benefit more if junior officers instead of supervising senior FSN’s were peers to them.

74. I’d wish to have more responsibilities as a Senior FSN who worked 20 years for the American Embassy.
75. I used to be a happy, full of energy and devoted to work employee. Some people need “a carrot” some people need a “stick” to work well. I only expected a “thank you” sometimes, but even this frequently seemed too much. Within almost 16 years of working for US Department of State I went to training twice, once to a conference and once I received an individual award. So my energy kind of diminished. I still work as perfectly as I can, but the energy is different. Sad, what else can I say...
76. Officers have their own agenda to pursue on how they can please their managers in order to get good evaluation for their onward assignment or carrier. Every three years in a way we reinvent the wheel although in the absence of officers (elapsing time between two supervisors) the work continues efficiently and flawlessly. The span of the American officers’ attention is limited to the three years they spend in a post and they do not really care what will happen in the Embassy after their time. I work for the Embassy for 31 years I am 53 years old and although I tried very hard to change this mentality around I have finally become cynical and I just do my job the best way I can under the circumstances hoping for a retirement at 55.
77. Sometimes lack of communication is a real barrier between supervisors and subordinates. Training as a key tool should be always available for FSNs. Cultural understanding is important and respect to those differences. I will gladly share working and relationship experience of 21 years with the USG.
78. This is the best organization.
79. Below are what I think to be key factors for good management: effective communication; continually seeking to improve work method; show interest in training subordinates and listening to them. Most managers I have worked with in the State Department have demonstrated these skills.
80. If you would have given me this survey just a couple of years ago, I would have answered the questions very differently: I used to really feel

part of this organization, even emotionally attached. Unfortunately, over the last couple of years, I am afraid the American officers we have in our office have shown poor judgment and poor management, especially when it comes to their relationships with other employees. I sincerely regret that. I remember the time when everybody, American officers and FSN's alike, were one big family. These days, the American officers really show that you are inferior to them. I have been working for this organization for almost 14 years and a half, 7 years of which in my current office. This is the 2nd office I work in.

81. I don't think any of my views/opinions matter or are considered.
82. I believe that if Management officers were given an extra 3 years of responsibility after they have left post for things done during their time, they would think twice about many of their decisions. Many decisions are made with their carriers in mind not the mission. It is very easy to write up a report to Washington about how great the idea is and getting a reward, but at Post we see the bad effects of these decisions and are left to deal with the bad outcome of these decisions. I have been with the Embassy for 11 years now and I must admit it is getting worse.
83. Working with U.S. Government would be better if they implement a retirement plan for FSNs, or do like U.N is doing for their employees. Due to inflation FSN are losing because they are paid in local currency while the local (African) government is lowering intentionally the inflation rate.
84. Even though I like working with the organization, with security issues I don't feel comfortable to talk too much about my employer outside of the compound.
85. Management is totally subjective. A new boss can have a 180 degree difference in his / her vision of how the job should be done, compared to their predecessor. And we have to obey regardless of their competence level, knowledge or experience. On the other hand the rotation of officers is the oxygen needed to stop FSNs becoming too deeply rooted in old practices.
86. Some questions are difficult to answer as your link to your supervisor might completely change the perception of the organization. Supervisors move frequently and you can have up and downs and extremely different styles of management. I am a senior FSN at Public Affairs. What I am doing depend on my supervisor as well as U.S. policies. So there might be many reasons why you feel very

comfortable and proud of your organization or not willing to tell others for whom you work. I think the quality of our supervisors is going down—more and more often lack of European culture and understanding of European uniqueness—and that makes the relationship more difficult; moreover, they have never been good managers, even if we enjoyed working with some of them. Why I like very much my job: it's very interesting and multifaceted; I have a lot of autonomy (which is possible due the work I do) and we are a good team of FSN colleagues.

87. The fact that employees are assessed based on what they do and not on what they are is already a great asset.
88. I'm working for the US government for more than twenty years. Of course it is very boring to work for the same organization for so many years, but I couldn't find any other better organization in Alexandria. We are over-populated and it's not easy to find a good work environment. On my part I always ask the new supervisor every three years to look at my job description, to change it by adding new duties that would be useful to my career or to move duties that can be performed by other colleagues. I think that the supervisor should work on making his staff happy with their duties. I really have one thing that annoys me and my colleagues as well, when the supervisor shows his/her surprise to hear that most of the FSNs are working for the organization for more than ten years—the supervisor may not understand the reasons that cause our long stay in the organization. Anyway, I happy to work for the US government at the American Center or Consulate in Alexandria.
89. Despite the fact that I am very willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond normally expected to make this organization more successful, there is no motivation. The performance criteria solely depends on the number of years worked. They can't differentiate between good or bad employees in terms of efficiency and even if they do, they do not do anything to look bad as they only stay for a limited number of years and they do not want to look bad. There is no management and or performance tool that is being used to turn inefficient employees to efficient ones. The upward mobility is also very much limited as the turnover rates are very low which is also a great dissatisfaction factor.
90. I have been working with the mission for over 28 years. During this period, I notice changes in the way managers are working. They

have less confidence in employees and with the computer age, they tend to work alone, not involving subordinates. Sometimes, I feel that the managers do not have the necessary training before coming to post and they often have no clue about the culture of the country. I personally think that managers should be more aware of the country's culture and give their chance to subordinates to see what they can do.

91. If an American supervisor exhibits abusive behavior and creates a hostile workplace, it doesn't work to report this and discuss it with the HR manager. Because, an American supervisor is always right; it is her/his way, or NO way. There is no control mechanism for officers if they are eligible to supervise. There is also no room to go if an FSN having difficulties with his/her supervisor or in case favoritism, workplace harassment, mobbing, and discrimination. On the other hand, as we heard from the Embassy management both personally and at the town hall meetings many times; don't even try to complain or discuss on anything because there are a lot of unemployed people waiting for a job in front of the Embassy! . . . Empowering us in many aspects will be helpful not only to create more productive workplace but also to reduce personnel budget.
92. Working for the government is a great duty.
93. Dealing with US Officers is the best part, the worst part is dealing with supervisors who are members of local staff. They just act as "super chief" sometimes with no consideration of your job and this is why I strongly prefer to work under a direct supervisory of a US officer and that I wish I could stay in this organization as long as I can. Local supervisors consider only how if you are fake with them and I'm not like that . . . With US supervisors I feel like I can give more than 100% of myself because they really support you not only as a worker but also as a person. So I use to work much better under US supervision because then I really feel like I'm working for the State department. I always wanted to live to the US so I'm glad I'm working at the Embassy, it's the must for me!
94. It varies from office to office. But the one thing I dislike is that FSN's are sometimes considered as second class citizens with second class opinions. Also, the lack of continuity and consistency in officers' attitudes is a little depressing, more so when you are trusted and asked to deal with responsibility and then suddenly you get a bad eval because personalities changed. Also, I was disappointed to

- find that in my office it is not a meritocracy but rather we are all equal, regardless of the effort we put into things. Equality is great when you are born. The moment you build yourself up and prove yourself, merit is importance. Otherwise, why should I make more effort if i get the same treatment as one who doesn't?
95. Training remains the problem area. I do this job for over 4 years now, and am still waiting for the specific training to increase my productivity. Same happened before in the organization (I was there for 17 years) where after 13 years of service, I finally got to go see how I should do my work!! Not investing in training is like going backwards...
 96. Personally I feel very grateful for having worked in this institution for over 30 years. However, there are good and bad things as in all the places. One of the most important things: Officers must bear in mind that without us they would be able to perform their work in a timely and efficient way and be able to trust our' work.
 97. You can disagree with a supervisor's decision but still accept it and work with it.
 98. For all the questions that I've chosen "Neither Agree nor Disagree"—this answer doesn't reflect my indecision in making a statement. It rather refers to the management decisions and work style of the Management present at post within a certain time frame. I've been employed for 13 years now and I've seen many Management Counselors succeeding one another, and it was proven a lot that the decisions of the current one were not a progress but a regress of the previous one.
 99. The survey will not show accuracy in results because leadership in officers changes so often (every 2/3 years, Americans, at times, are not on the same sheet of music and personalities and billets are in conflict). State needs to define leadership, management and implement people skills in their initial trading seminars and followed up often.
 100. Comment: I feel as a negative fact of the system of this organization is that due to the fact that our American Supervisors change every 2 or 3 years, sometimes we have to deal with new Supervisors that do not recognize and/or have respect for the loyal service we have always given to the organization, as well as the vast experience and knowledge most of us have (in my case 26 years of service). We have to prove almost every time that we perform our jobs with all our

best efforts and we are always willing/trying to improve the image of the US Government and to try to make our Section and our jobs more efficient and effective and, open to help them in every way we can.

101. I bet that if FSNs and Supervisors were all aware of the importance of the subject of this survey, their relationships will improve drastically, since they all will agree that they are part of the same team.
102. Newly assigned officers should read the position descriptions of their staff in order to know with accuracy what to request and to expect from each employee. I would also recommend that they familiarize themselves with the host county's labor laws and labor culture, which might differ greatly from that in the U.S.
103. For question number 2: "It is frequently necessary for a manager to use authority and power when dealing with subordinates." The answer is that a manager must control and verify employees work. It is not an issue of frequency, but of consistency and quality. Management sometimes takes credit for projects initiated by local staff or work carried out by locals. More credit should be given to employees. Local supervisors are superfluous, sometimes jealous and do not always provide the best supervision or guidance for employees. All local staff should be supervised by qualified Officers. Employee evaluation should be totally revised. Jobs should be given based on competence and past experience, not on a job description. We are people not numbers. Salaries should follow this rule as well. Some locals have very high salaries and are not at all competent for the position. For HR: Americans should always interview a potential candidate before any testing is done. Some HR personnel are not adept in the decision making process for hiring local staff. Watch out for nepotism and insider references. Locals should receive more training on America's system of government and history and learn how to write business letters in English.
104. I am happy with everything about my employer except the criteria for the awards program.
105. My opinions that are of a negative quality reflect my dissatisfaction with my compensation, not my dissatisfaction with my job itself.
106. More communication and training programs for FSN in order to have a very good performance and help to develop the all the type of work.

107. I have come to dislike the “them” and “us” attitude that exists between FSN and American personnel and which only developed over the last 6 or 7 years. There doesn't seem to be much trust anymore. I used to socialize a lot with the American community but have completely stopped when it became obvious that new staff arriving at Post were no longer interested. It's a shame as it used to be so good.
108. I believe that American local engaged staff should be delegated with additional duties in order to enable officers to dedicate more time to important issues. Officers should always be professional, especially when dealing with the public and remember that they represent the United States of America.
109. In past we have more chance to help, support and give ideas. Now for us it is harder and more difficult to communicate with American supervisors. In past I felt as a part of family and now I am just employee.
110. No clear position descriptions written to cover all major tasks/responsibilities.
111. I think US diplomats are not prepared to be managers. Strategies are never designed and evaluation of results never takes place. Local personnel, who do most of the work, are seldom taken into consideration and there are no career plans for them. When I enter the U.S. Government, I never expected to remain in the same category for the rest of my life.
112. I am very proud to work for the US government. My family and I always had strong ties to the US culture. Working for State has been a true pleasure but lately also a true frustration. The new officers coming in . . . are just soooo different and distant and then the “old guard”. Often some have no manners. How about a good morning and not a good morning! Hellooo . . . what's this for an attitude. Supervisors need to remember that they are only as good as their staff. That said, I am a supervisor and strongly believe in that saying.
113. I realize that as an FSN, I am in a difficult position working for a foreign government whose policies I may not agree with but who offers a good salary, honest work and certain securities. I have chosen to focus on the charitable work that this government offers to my country and accept the rest as a means to that end. Additionally, I have learned new skills from good managers and I have learned patience from bad ones.

114. Most of the American Officers that come to post do not regard the locals; they see us as sub-standards. Awards are presently selectively to Americans. Only Americans get high honors, and FSNs get trivial honor. This attitude doesn't reflect the American philosophy of equality.
115. I have been working with the U.S. Embassy Nouakchott for a little over 2 years. I joined the mission as a telephone operator, then got promoted last year after 16 months, as consular assistant, and it's been a wonderful experience so far. i have been blessed with very professional and knowledgeable supervisors and head of sections who have really inspired the very best in me in the way of job performance: hard work, team effort, integrity, loyalty, communication, dialogue and mutual respect. During these 2 years, I have also been able to take several online courses and attend trainings which helped me develop new skills. The job might be very challenging and stressful at times, but our good and positive work environment keeps me motivated and makes me want to try harder every day and achieve higher goals for the mission. Having lived in the United States for 5 years, I have been able to accommodate to the mission's values pretty quickly. For me, serving this mission, gives me a sense of belonging to this great nation and its culture that I really love, even if I am not its own citizen! i think that's what makes America unique: diversity and equal opportunities for all!
116. I enjoy my work and my colleagues, but because of recent management structural changes I feel that the organization does a poor job of making me feel like a part of the team. It's almost like a caste system with the Americans on one side and the locals on the other.
117. I have been working with the US Embassy Ouagadougou for 24 years and I am proud of the management tools and concepts that State has given me throughout my career. As a result, I feel confident with this knowledge I acquired, given this opportunity I did take advantage, I can be relocated anywhere and to serve with professionalism in any company with ease. I have been highly trainable in expendable and non-expendable stocks managing using the updated automated software what make me so confident. Thank you State.
118. In addition to all the questions, I would like to emphasize that every post has different problems and should not be treated the same. Most of the time post do what Embassy proposes and probably will

not fit in post needs. Officers can learn from FNS with experience but most of the times they refuse to learn thinking that they know everything. I have seen it a lot!!

119. It would help if less micro managing is done.
120. Perhaps it would be useful for the FSN's to evaluate their American officers. It would even help the State Department to assign them to other Posts in accordance with their evaluations.
121. Due to the fact that this is a very small post if the FSNs are not kept in the loop, Post will be to a disadvantage. The FSNs are the ones who best know the country and the day to day running of Post so it would be best to communicate with them.
122. I am at Public Affairs. Based on 10 years of experience after consolidation, working with American officers is very difficult making them understand our operations. Sometimes lack of understanding causes problems on daily public diplomacy work, especially relationship with host country contacts. FSNs often obey their orders and instructions, but not quite accept their authority in mind. I hope to see as many senior officers become the head of the mission. Good senior officers will do really well on the Ambassador job, because they had greater chances to understand more thoroughly about public opinion, public attitude, public relations of the host country. FSNs generally accept American management's authority when they made decision without consulting with FSNs, but if they consult beforehand, that would be very appreciative. I feel lucky working for State Department, but I also feel old days were happier.
123. Greetings and congratulations on an excellent survey you have organized to inquire the sentiments in the field. The US Embassy is a first rate employer but there are many flaws nonetheless. I am very attached to this organization and have input more than 30 years already. I am now attached to the organization because of the important values it upholds or tries to uphold, and mostly because of the principal goal: to bolster bilateral relationships. Plus, there are many good management factors that attract me to stay within the employ of the U.S. Embassy here and they include but are not limited to: –participative decision-making, –the somewhat flat organization in terms of “power-distance” between ranking officials and local employees (compared with Malaysian society and organizations outside the US Embassy) –the “informality” with which we

may work internally (for example, we don't need to dress formally except if we are receiving visitors or representing the Embassy at events off-site, –the excellent drive to achieve Mission goals via top management's periodic reminder's about this and including locals in the process, –the first rate tools provided by the Embassy to get our jobs done, for example: vehicles to get to off-site events and programs, travel and per diem out-of-town for TDY, GSO support, etc –comfortable and functional offices (not just pretty!) and conducive physical environment (airconditioning, etc) –access into the chancery for the physically disabled (parking, ramps, elevators, etc). But now for some disquieting trends which is presented with very good intentions and not to criticize without charity: –I don't feel as a member of the Embassy "family" as I used to before (there is greater feeling of "Americans" and "FSNs" as separate entities while we work for the same goals and aspirations (but it was excellent many years ago) –The vocabulary for locals (LES) is itself not appropriate. We tend to feel "LESSER" now than before when we were referred to as "FSNs". –LES no longer park inside the Embassy proper but in a separate lot –We are not entitled to sick leave when "family members" are sick –We are not entitled to R&R when environmental situations are deteriorating (example when the Air Pollutant Index is considered seriously unhealthy—but American officers get such privileges) –We are not entitled to purchase Commissary goods –LES supervisors are not respected the way American supervisors are respected –The compensation package for senior LES are not comparable to similar positions outside the Embassy – The rewards for long-term service for LES are mere tokenisms – There is less mingling of American and Malaysian employees today compared with what we had enjoyed several years ago. It could be because of the 9-11 aftermath and Americans have become more "careful" (and they should not be blamed for that "carefulness") but more inter-mingling events sponsored by the Embassy is probably the way to move forward. It could also be because we are doing more with less resources today and have less time to do other social events—but then we forget that the most important element in any organization is human capital and human capital is founded upon human interdependence and relationship building. Thank you for the opportunity you have given me to share my candid, sincere opinions. I wish you every success in your good work because it

affects America, Malaysia, and all participants in our global village. God bless America and the world.

124. When I first came to work in this organization, I was proud of it. But now, after 10 years, I feel disappointed. I am not proud to tell my friends about my employer anymore. The most essential reason is the payment, especially in my country, Vietnam. I don't know what the U.S. State Department salary scales is based on, the annual salary for the ordinarily resident is much much lower than it is for the not-ordinarily resident (who is holding diplomatic passport). For example, the annual salary of FSN-6 position grade for ordinarily resident is US\$5,672 which is equivalent to US\$29,379 of the FP-8 position grade for not-ordinarily resident. This is obviously unfair. Additionally, the salary the U.S. Government pays us, the local employees, is much lower (and becomes lower and lower) than other organizations pay for their local employees. Finally, if there is a chance I (and many of my colleagues) will take a job in another organization to get more decent earnings.
125. The American Officers with whom I have worked have been extremely good and always gave me a sense of belonging to this organization.
126. I strongly feel about the review of the present salary structure, which allows minimal increase after step 14. Once an employee reaches the last steps he/she after some years starts feeling stagnated and demoralized.
127. Nothing to add . . .
128. Something serious needs to be done about State's high/idealistic goals. They ceased to exist, being replaced by the practical modern objectives. In the field of diplomacy, idealism is something that motivates, gives sense to one's work and keeps the team together.
129. Officers discuss everything with subordinates as no one is 100% perfect, one can get better ideas from subordinates too. We earn respect for what we do for the organization in order to keep everyone safe. Managers should be open to their subordinates so that the sense of being "part of the family" remain intact. Being in the security we can't discuss much out of the office about the organization due to operational security reasons. I really love my job and enjoy working with the organization.
130. I try NOT discussing my organization issues with people outside for the SECURITY reasons, but always keep informed people on

various opportunities the U.S. Government provides to local citizens in my country. Diplomats whom I used to work with had good management skills, were really good supervisors, nice and kind people, fair at work, and friendly colleagues. I would also recommend mainly young diplomats to not hesitate using local FSN's experience and be more helpful to FSNs in their everyday activity. It should be really team work in order to reach better cooperation and achievements.

131. Management should include us in decision making process.
132. Having worked here for a long time, I can say that I am among the luckiest people. My job and what it entails as services are what I love. But it makes one feel frustrated when the work one does is not recognized or ignored in some way. There are instances when credit for work done is given to someone who has just put 10% of all the efforts to carry out successfully one project. But when you just love the job, you just say maybe the next US boss will be fairer than this one, and this happens, until another one takes over and treats you like nothing. Fortunately, one person does not represent the whole community. It also happen that US boss will give more attention to some section's projects and will make nothing of other section's project—how important the subject or audience might be.
133. The rules and regulations are quite fair when it comes to management and supervision. Two very strong points of the Department of State: 1) Access to information on policies and regulations, including on management/supervision issues is being made easily available to local staff. 2) The Department's ongoing concern to improve its handling of local employees is commendable.
134. Management doesn't care about locally employed stuff. They listen to FSN problems but do nothing to help.
135. Majority of the decisions are based on personal likes or dislikes. FSN staff gets the same kind of treatment as the general public. There is no distinction between a local employee and an outsider. The organization does not own its locally engaged employees and they work with a sense of insecurity. The level of trust and respect (from the American staff) between the two communities; the FSN and the American staff is diminishing. No wage increase is also creating a problem for the local staff and they have started to seek employment in other organizations which pay more and have more benefits.

136. Since India is so different from the U.S., there is often an adjustment time needed when a new FSO comes, in as the FSO who comes in with perceptions based on what he/she are used to in the U.S., finds that those might not work in local conditions. Also, since India was till recently was regarded as a “third-world developing” country rather than a “developed” one (imagines in the West tend to show India more as a land of snake charmers and Rajahs, rather than one with an IT revolution, etc.), many Americans tend to be more cautious in the beginning when delegating responsibility to local staff.
137. The biggest career challenges these days are perceptual...psychological. Not technical. Not even skills-based. The major adjustments we need to make are mental.
138. Managers’ style is very important—working together equals success to the manager to the FSN and to the organization. Not that many American officers are capable of following that style but whoever does, enjoys the respect and support of the FSNs.
139. Management quality strongly depends on the personality and education level of supervisor. During 12 years of my employment with the Embassy, I have seen both superb and very poor supervision. I got an impression that supervisors are designated by the State Department without proper consideration.
140. It is an honor working for the US Government however, truth be told, our salaries and benefits quite frankly do not match what our local market is paying for similar positions. Although we do not pay taxes in Kuwait, as expatriates we do not enroll in social security; we do not have a retirement plan or pension plan and our low salaries make it difficult to cope with rising inflation. Most of us have sent their families back to their home country to cut down on expenses.
141. It has been pleasure working for my program, (I work for the office in Tbilisi), my supervisors both here and in Washington are professionals and very good persons. I appreciate the attitude they treat subordinates. I never felt I was one :)
142. The present Management seems not to know its duties well. We have endless meetings about Service standards, process mapping, which seems to be too much. Our Chief stated that we (our section in particular) meet and exceed the standards at our Post, never the less time and again we are having meetings in the shape of “school lessons”—where our boss is a teacher—which really takes

a lot work time off—and since our boss recently arrived to Post he does not understand a lot of things related to the job performance. Also there is no motivation for work—due to the high inflation that happened in our country during the past 4 years the current salary is not enough for the normal life. However we are always reminded that we work for the Department of State and should be proud of this fact! How can we be proud if due to the security regulations we are NOT recommended to tell anyone that we work for the American Embassy! Salary is not that good as it was 4 years back—and there is constant pressing from the Management that really brings stress to the local staff. I like my job and enjoy working for this Embassy, however started thinking about finding some other—well-paid job. (Just FYI—about 25 staff members left job here for the last year—one of the main reasons for their departure was a salary issue). Also our Management has very “interesting” approach to the trainings for local staff provided/offered by the State Department—it’s very-very difficult to get a needed training—training is presented as a gift, followed by the words: Citation:” You are so lucky that you got it this time! Please, value what we are doing for you!” well, there is much more can be said but I have go back to work.

143. I was very attached to the organization and I loved being a member of the US Embassy team until my former boss allowed and even encouraged a colleague to take over a program that I had created and developed; that’s when I no longer felt part of the family, although I did not complain. Since then, I have felt that I don’t want a lifetime career as an Embassy employee.
144. I used to be very happy working for this organization . . . I’ve been working for over almost 13 years, I have a daily contact with the American officers and I have come to the conclusion that the lower quality of the human resources (in terms of instruction, experience, etc) is very well reflected by the employees’ performance.
145. In many occasion managers do not take into consideration the opinion of the employees, and they just have to accept the decisions, over the years the employees will do not argue or will want to have a discussion regarding a decision being made that will impact their work environment, is like they become submissive.
146. The thing that irks me most is that FSNs are treated like second class citizens. We are just numbers, expendable and anonymous and

- have no rights or avenues of redress. We are told that we are valued employees but actions speak louder than words.
147. Within years of employment we have got used to the fact that every 2–3 years officers change, and the new supervisors arrive with their own vision and management styles. Quite often they tend to ignore the best practices established at post and force the changes. In spite of competitiveness of our current salaries in the labor market people tend to stay, since they realize that the benefits they get are valuable. I am pleased to have been working for the State Department overseas and find my job interesting and enjoyable.
 148. The management style seems to be crisis management. In other words, let's deal with this crisis and then move to the next crisis. They seem to be eager to change things for the sake of change and when change does actually seem warranted, no action is taken. Each mission is different but the overall way in which the organization is run leaves much to be desired. The greatest complaint I have as an FSN is that there is no incentive to improve yourself. We have a retention problem at this post. We live in an economy that despite the crisis that is doing well and jobs are easy enough to get if you have the right qualifications. Most companies here have programs through which employees can further their education. I am not talking about online courses which only the State Department recognizes, but university education—recognized degrees which the company pays and which, in the long run, benefit the company. I already have a BA but very much would like my MA, but can't afford the fees. Would the “company” benefit from me receiving my MA? Of course, they would. The courses Americans offer do not provide you with skills that translate beyond the embassy environment. Retention will continue to be a problem at this post and other posts like it if something is not done to make it more attractive to stay. Increasing salaries is not the answer either. In a country where most people can pay 61% of their salary taxes, any raise we get goes straight to the tax man.
 149. In my work it is extremely important what kind of personality will be my next boss. People (management) change every 2–3 years and it's a pure luck (or unfortunate) who will you get next, because the atmosphere and everything in the office strongly depends almost only to the State Department Officer's skills (personality). I was lucky in my carrier so far and I had good managers, and even when

one crazy person came and made horrible atmosphere in the office by yelling, throwing office supplies from the desk, I was on maternity leave. But right now salaries are no more attractive as they were before and if I get some nasty person for my next boss, I may be ready to leave my job and find better paid one. So, we have very little contact, or no contact at all with any other American but our own Section Chief and if he is O.K. person, everything works fine. If he is grumpy, nasty, nervous, unhappy—the whole section will suffer for the next few years.

150. It seems that the U.S. Dept. of State doesn't put much emphasis on employees' experiences these days. New hires from outside get higher grades immediately. It's getting more and more difficult to find respectful managers among American officers.
151. The questions are very ambiguous. The answers would have been different if the Management would show some interest in changing an obsolete system of evaluation and promotion of personnel.
152. Overall Embassy management doesn't do much to improve FSN's employment. They're coming to post for a year or two so no need to worry what will happen after departure. The same situation for 16 years here.
153. Management style is very open and allows employees to talk freely with their supervisors. However, the management style is largely dependent on the Americans, as different officers use different styles.
154. In general, local staff do feel strongly attached to the organization and feel proud to be a member of such an organization. However, some views expressed above are not directed at the organization itself but at the people that comprise management in the organization. People are the organization and if the management doesn't appreciate and value us, it is only normal for them to become detached, lose morale and finally leave the organization.
155. Nothing to add but what is there . . .
156. Based on my length of service, I would really recommend having senior FSN's to join the "training team" to give some trainings to other colleagues in other posts so we feel like we are also committed to make a positive change in this organization and that we are also a real team players who can reach the same goal . . . on time.
157. When "neither agree nor disagree" is marked this means that the answer depends on situations and circumstances.

158. I feel lucky and blessed to work for US Embassy at my country. It was a dream since childhood to become an interpreter and work for international organization, but never could imagine that i will be little bit more then just interpreter, i worked as assistant and now as coordinator. And not in a simple international organization but the US EMBASSY! I am very proud of it and very thankful to those people who trusted me and chose me to vacant position at the Embassy over 6 years ago.
159. Officers rotate every 2–3 years. Each time FSN needs to prove him/herself before the new officers. This is healthy somehow to do our best, but in some cases officers would not recognize FSN exerted efforts. FSNs resign once other opportunity comes. Would it not be better that FSN stays serving the Embassy?
160. We see various types of managerial styles since Americans tour posts every two years or so. Generally, most of them are good managers but sometimes we see bad managers to extent that local staff resign or leave after working so many years at the state department. Managers should know in detail cultures, attitudes and other factors of people of the assigned country.
161. Being a Foreign Service National, American supervisors who come and go every two or three years have to consult with me regarding any local issue. FSNs usually have the institutional knowledge that the Americans lack. However, sometimes American officers feel lax about duties that they have to do, or learn to do, rather than relying on us all the time. In addition, although we support our offices so vigorously and rigorously, we are often frustrated by the lack of support from our supervisors.
162. There should be a total review of policies pertaining to Americans. We have no rights or privileges. No access to commissary, no parking on the compound etc . . . We feel like “nor fish nor fowl”. Why?
163. In my perception, the local staff is underestimated and very often ignored specifically because of their qualifications and high level of professionalism. Many FSNs are overqualified and their abilities are lost or misused—the organization is focused mostly on the happiness of Americans. Other international organizations in the country treat their local staff as the institutional memory and back bone of the organization. At the embassy this concept is unheard of.
164. I really feel proud for being working for American Embassy in Cairo for almost 20 years. i think I’ve learnt a lot from the way

my American supervisors manage the work. I love American style especially when i visited U.S couple of times for training purposes. I have great respect for America because when I was there i felt real freedom, respect law, supervisory training that i took was really productive and changed my way in many ways I supervise my team. One thing I told my colleagues and my friends from my last visit to America for training before I go to Baghdad that if you didn't visit America so you did not see the world, America is the world that I love. Thanks for giving me the chance to express my thoughts and feeling in here.

165. It is somehow frustrating when people do not trust FSNs enough just because they are not American.
166. To achieve good management requires time. The 2-year-tour basis at state is the very weakness of the system. By the time you establish a good work relationship your partner, supervisor, is leaving. You cannot build up that expertise with your American partner. A good example of that is with Americans who stay four years. Performance is far better than with people who stay 2 years. In other words the big loser is the organization.
167. All right with this organization and with supervisors of it.
168. Nothing to add to your information . . .
169. If some of my replies seem inconsistent, it is because I have seen vastly varying situations here—it all depends on the American officer on top. In recent years, unfortunately, despite what we are told at training, there is a dangerous—I would say suicidal—move to disempower FSNs who are the backbone, the continuity of the Mission.
170. American Officers are not so friendly to us. Separate treatment for American verses local employees.
171. No comment.
172. As a non us citizen there is no room to make decisions or to work independently. Career is not possible. If this is clear from the start, this is a great organization to work for, especially as a working mother.
173. I would be just as happy working for a different organization as long as the type of work was similar and may be rewards are similar or even better . . . I would enjoy discussing my organization with people outside it, but I do not discuss my organization with people outside it—this is security . . .

174. Thank you for taking the time to consider our views and all the best!
175. Thank you for this opportunity.
176. In the beginning of my 10+ years at the State Dept. the atmosphere was fairly good, however within 2 years that deteriorated sharply. Generally one is very aware of the strong dividing line between the 2 cultures and that an FSN will always be considered an inferior... which is reflected in the way that requests are given. One point though is that from time to time a genuinely caring Officer comes along who isn't pretending to purport the "FSNs are important to us" directive... that is when local staff actually give their best.
177. I think most of American organizations should give management training to all managers quite often, either on site or abroad to reinforce their capacities. Most flaws derive from poor magt qualifications from supervisors. This will help give a better profile to American organizations outside the US. Hope to see changes occur; thanks a lot.
178. Thank you for this opportunity. One of the issues that I have taken up with several other FSN colleagues is the lack of social skills of American officers toward foreign employees in the sense that there is no inclusion within their circles. An example, during social gatherings it is very obvious that American officers will mingle and socialize with their own and leave FSN's off to their own too, there is no effort to socialize and socially a lack of acknowledgment on a daily basis starting from the basic response to a "Good morning". There is a strong sense among the consulate, this is we and this is you, we're not the same.
179. Training programs are not very often equally distributed. Certain sections are given much priority over others. Funds are almost always available for certain section while to others there is always the same music; "There is no money".
180. I have been with this consular office for 45 years, and obviously enjoy the work and in most cases, the people! Sometimes the handling of local staff matters, such as salaries, leaves a little to be desired, but obviously is controlled from far above!
181. The morale of the department can be boosted or destroyed by one American with a bad attitude towards FSNs.
182. My views on management/supervision: Trainings for Managers / Supervisors: I believe that the SAME training should be mandatory for Managers, for Senior local staff and for relevant HR staff. This

will enable the HR to understand how you (the employer) require the managers/senior staff to perform in this organization. In cases where a problem exists and HR exclusively supports the employee, thus leaving the supervisor unprotected, then it is the supervisor who has to bear the future consequences of a 'problematic relationship' between the supervisor/subordinate. I can understand that HR office is a 'shelter' for the employees who need guidance to their problems, but do not forget that the supervisor needs this guidance and protection, too. My employment with the U.S. State Department: When the organization is clear with the guidance as to the values to be considered by ALL employees, then the promotion of these, by the Management/Supervisors/Employees would be successful, therefore advancing the level of job satisfaction. My opinion in relation to questions in this survey: questions are very good—survey could be done more frequently.

183. For me, management is teamwork.
184. The best management practice that the State Dept people in London do is a) listen to their FSN employees and b) often do what these employees suggest! The ability to take on-board criticisms is a very useful one and indicative, in my personal opinion, of the liberal views of the State Dept. I still wouldn't recommend to anyone new staying here for more than 3–4 years but I don't regret my experience nor working with colleagues. But I'm still looking to quit as there is no useful training, no salary incentives, no promotion opportunities and our technology roadmap appears dissociated from any needs by technical professionals such as me :-)
185. Local cultural reality should be taken into account in Management's decision regarding benefits.
186. Thank you.
187. There is need to spread equal training opportunities to every staffs especially when it is outside the country because it will encourage better knowledge impastation, exposure, confidence and skill evaluation/understanding across posts. The essence of training is for empowerment so it should not be done out of favoritism. Some have spent more than five years without any training opportunity outside the country even when training courses have been submitted over and over which is relevant to the person's job.
188. I believe the Department needs to put more effort and resources into bettering the working conditions and benefits of its local staff.

189. Management's evaluation should include a review by FSNs as well.
190. When a manager is sent to post should be interviewed by IT people in Washington and only be assigned the job upon their knowledge, skills and experience. Must be Microsoft certified in order to run a Computer Center. It is impossible to run an office of that nature only by "pushing rank" and have absolutely no idea of what a Network is.
191. I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected in order to help this organization be successful—also depending on the way the supervisors management of the office treat us employees, manage to motivate the team, appreciate the efforts.
192. We are told not to discuss our employment with outsiders for security reasons. Satisfaction is dependent on who is in charge at the time you ask it. I have personal experience with those who use FSNs as stepping stones without regard for our input; those who believe they can be rude and inconsiderate to subordinates; and I have worked for those who show their appreciation for us in ways that do not cost the American government money or loss of productivity—all dependent upon the person at the top at the time on the national and local level. My productivity and job satisfaction are dependent on the whims of management— I do my best work when I know what I do matters to management, and not just what makes them look good to their superiors or guests or inspectors. Interpersonal skills are as important as knowledge of the work required for managers and supervisors at all levels.
193. The American officer need to learn a basic culture in country they work in order to understand the employees. Work as a team not as a boss. Humble but firm on decision making but please listen what the FSN need inform you first. Minor mistakes can cause a lot of dissatisfaction on FSN.
194. Managers should not simply make most decisions without consulting subordinates. Managers should not verbally over use authority and power when dealing with subordinates.
195. Most FSNs have put in many years of work, like 25, 30 years and their salaries have reached the max. And they have another 8 to 12 years more to go. There should be some form of incentives for these employees. Also FSN supervisors sometimes face difficulty handling FSN employees. The Americans should listen to FSN Supervisors grievances and help them to resolve such issues.

196. I am happy to work with US Government.
197. Locally employed staff or FSNs are the backbone of the organization and they always try to give out their best during their association. But problems erupt when American officers during their usually short tenures try to show off, or are guided by their whims and egos, that often results in disruption in harmony in an otherwise smooth teamwork. Some of the officers, being vindictive in character, will even like to go to their extremes but that spells disaster. If the vindictiveness is coupled with very strong personal likes and dislikes, the consequences become dangerous. In present day's globalized management style, egotists are never welcome and they should be trained to win over their traits of throwing personal tantrums such as thinking I am the best before they assume new positions. The stint is short. So why not work with FSNs with a smiling face and judicious and impartial dealings! After all, only the memory of one's own behavior lingers. There are, of course, always exceptions. Thanks for giving us the opportunity to share our feelings.
198. I think the Department of State is a good organization to work for, but no-one should spend his or hers whole career only in one organization. American colleagues have a huge impact on FSN's opinion about their jobs and organization itself. As Americans change after a certain period, then the job satisfaction is also a subject for change.
199. Local salaries should be raised.
200. The work load is lopsided at times due to seasonal occurrence: one person may have a whole lot, and other FSN colleagues aren't too busy. When you complain nothing happens. All managers have a different style, but it is often repetitive and everything changes back to what it once was after a few years. In general, all American supervisors are very friendly. The word passes from top to bottom well. I don't think careers for FSN's get developed for individuals, but if you are lucky you get put into a higher paid position. I think they should not have the awards program.
201. For my position at this organization accessibility for outside publics is very important. I think that the closing-down of the American Centers, where much of our programming was done and where we could interact with our publics on a regular basis, was not a forward-looking or very wise decision overall.
202. The state department system is unique because the management staff is on a permanent rotational basis. Most Supervisors spend

only two to three years at post. There are therefore only a few who really get attached to their workers to the point of wanting to see their personal development over time. Career options are limited by the very nature of the mission of the Embassies. I have heard of how a technician rose to the rank of General manager in some private US firms which is something that can never happen in the Missions as these high level posts are reserved. Coupled with the fact that personal achievement in the form of learning and experience over the years in a post does not alter your grade, the only option for some very hard working locals is to look for work outside. On the job Training in your field of work at state department facilities does not guarantee a grade or step increase. Even merit increases does not seem to address this problem. What are the motivating factors at work in a mission? Would realization of the self be a consideration? Yes I believe it should. According to Maslow, this is very high level is his pyramidal scale and the State Department should consider this as more and more FSNs take self-development courses.

203. I have to say that I am lucky my supervisor and the supervisor of the section are very good people, with very good manner and very supportive to the staff.
204. Public diplomacy is sometimes conducted non-diplomatically, when supervisors are “occasional diplomats”, in other words, have great dedication, but are not experienced or without natural diplomatic talent and flexibility. Achievement of the mission goal may turn into disaster when local conditions are not considered and the mission goals are blindly cherished—particularly, opinions of local employees who know the target audiences better, are not considered when planning/evaluating activities; needs of target audiences are not considered either. Results: damage of what was existing (and trust as well), without replacement; conducting activities for the sake of activities (and reports); target audience does not understand and value the activities; level of distrust in general public grows; most qualified local staff resigns. It is needless to speak about staff morale at such conditions.
205. It is a shame that sometimes various negative characteristic traits of various American employees have such a negative influence and portray the institution in a completely obstructive light.
206. Would be nice that FSNs be treated with more consideration. It is a strong possibility that other nations have also valuable individuals.

- Have heard so many occasions that FSNs are the most important link in the Embassy. Would be nice that behind those words be some facts to sustain these claims. It would also be nice for the American staff to recall that they represent the American nation and make this goal prevail over their personal issues. At the end of the day it is an interesting experience, from many points of view. I for example, despite many challenges I was put through, still maintain a solid dedication for the organization, hoping that better times and persons will come.
207. The Management here treats local FSNs fairly well. We get some say how projects should be run. Good work is appreciated. Recently, upon request by a senior FSN (myself) for the first time FSNs in my department can have meetings every week at the same time as the US officers to discuss issues and improve the workflow . . . great for team spirit.
 208. The above opinions are in relation to the current management. As the management changes after a few years, my opinions might also change.
 209. "I do not feel 'emotionally attached' to this organization." I have not answered this question, as I believe in any professional capacity or role, one has to be emotionally unattached to perform objectively your role. I am attached but would like to have a detached attachment to act objectively.
 210. Thanks for this survey!
 211. Those who listen cannot do anything; those who can do not listen. So what's the point?
 212. Management not respecting FSNs. We are not treated equally. Performance of local staff are often ignored. American's most often less experienced and work-knowledge than the locals mistreat LES by taking advantage of the economic condition of the host country.
 213. Like many around the world, I have had some difficult times relating to the current administration but I really feel that "I belong" to the state department and American supervisors are usually making us feel "part of the team". The recent elections in the U.S. made me very proud again to work for the best example of a great democracy and a great country. The recent freeze on our salaries however, it felt unjust as it was not applied to everyone.
 214. It would be a great welcome if we are treated as equals and respected on salary. We had an increase of 3% and it was cut down to 1.5%. Also we do not have any bonus salary or vacation pay or bonus

- salary. We need to have a set rule also for the LES that we get a fixed performance increase every year.
215. I am glad to be a part of the American government in Algeria and help the Algerian Military to be more professional, and also help people through the Humanitarian Assistance Program. I can sign for the rest of my career with this organization if I have a decent pay raise every year.
 216. In the course of the years that I have been in this employment it seems to me that the loyalty to the employer and personal devotion to the job have been losing appreciation. No one views it as a value anymore. It is very demotivating. On the contrary, some managers indicated on several occasions that it is “trendy” to change employment often. For some people who do not prefer changing relationships often it also is demotivating. I appreciate this survey as it seems that this issue is being given some attention now.
 217. Things have changed tremendously regarding the quality of officers employed by the U.S. government. Years ago there were more care from the administration to the foreign nationals and considered them part of their own family. Now we can see the difference and that we are only LES, which for many of us translated it as (Less) We seldom achieve anything with management which is less responsive than before. FSNs who spent more than 25 years serving the US feel more caring about the future than the Americans themselves, but now you hear the word “we need new blood” disregarding the expertise factor. Good Luck.
 218. I have always felt as part of this organization/team. Manager(s) I have been working for (2/3) have being supportive and assisted in a professional manner during my 7 yrs of employment, they had a great communication, organizational and leadership skills. Having one exception only, I'd give the highest grade for communication style, level of support, organizational level, as well as for delegating to people style.
 219. The only serious morale issue for FSNs at our post is our compensation plan which is not adequate at all (Kyiv, Ukraine). Most people that quit are those who find better jobs elsewhere. If I quit, that would be only for a better job offer in terms of salary. Other than that, we do not really have any management related issues.
 220. In the Embassy I am working we have had great management officers. I know not all Embassies are so lucky. I am convinced that

- managers should consult with their subordinates before making decisions, but they need to make decisions themselves and sometimes use their power if needed.
221. Theory wise, the policies or disciplines are good, but most of the time they get away with it, bending the rules to accommodate them. Many a times too, their decisions are penny wise and pound foolish (no different from other countries attitude). “Government mentality”. And to be fair, they certainly are good managers but sad to say they are overpowered.
 222. I have been working with the State Department as FSN for more than 25 years, the fact that I am able to work so many years in an organization speaks volume about my working place. I like two ways communication we are able to solve an issue together and also agreed to disagree to keep the peace with our officers. Of course there are times I when I met with difficult bosses but I tell myself they come and go, but I can stay as long as I am needed and I enjoy the working environment of office. The new group of young Americans are not so diplomatic when it comes to deal with people, I have a junior officer who asked me to do something I should not do but when I pointed it out, still insists that there is nothing wrong but quietly make no changes on the issue.
 223. I enjoy to work with this organization, thanks very much
 224. The “Them & US” attitude of Americans and Locally Employed Staff is nothing short of discrimination.
 225. Advantage for officers to know the local customary practices and be people friendly. When dealing with employees, best to use a soft approach before sending a strong message. Despite the number of sick leave allowed, the pattern should be monitored to cut abuse. Employees should be trained to handle the job and customer oriented.
 226. I am completely happy to work with this organization as it fulfills my dream of becoming a better and well organized man.
 227. Managers should treat their subordinates with respect, and seek other outlets for their bad tempers rather than taking pleasure in being mean and nasty.
 228. Because I had a good local supervisor, I learned a lot from the organization. So, it’s not the organization that inspired me, it’s my former supervisor. If you really mean the organization, the organization doesn’t have a personal meaning for me or emotionally attached, it’s

more about my colleagues and how a good team work we are. However, American officers sometimes ruin that. Some of them don't understand that good relationships are important in order to get work done smoothly. And about the discussion about the organization with contacts, if you mean discussion with friends, I'd say that I don't because most of local people don't like one section in my organization, which is visa section. Visa section has a bad reputation here. So, I avoid to tell others that I work for the US Embassy. But, if you mean whether I talk to my contacts proudly about my section, which is Information Resource Center, I'm proud to tell others that I'm part of the section and I feel like I'm part of my section in the organization, but not the whole organization.

229. At times the management/supervisor should understand the local culture and qualification level of an employee, before he be given another person's task(s) which the employee may feel he is over worked for less pay.
230. More local culture understanding!
231. We need more training on job.
232. Managers and supervisors must keep an open mind and keep abreast with the latest development and trends in their own field in order to embrace changing needs and trends without fear plus to be able to manage their department effectively.
233. Thank you for pushing me to think hard on this survey.
234. Management and supervisory practices could be strengthened. Often, supervisors rise to their positions based on professional merit, lacking the requisite skills and practices to motivate people and reward good performance not to mention creating team cohesion. Supervisors in some cases are not strong enough in providing prompt feedback.
235. It is my personal opinion that we suffer from an "us and them" mentality between the American direct hire staff and FSN staff at post, I personally feel that this is terrible for morale when American staff cannot even say "hello" in the corridors within the office. It is also my personal feeling that this mentality of "us and them" starts and the very top and works its way down. I also feel that the management and supervision styles by my current management team are far from professional. One instance that comes to mind, was when a member of staff received a pay increase after gaining a promotion and the management officer decided to tell the whole office of the

salary increase before informing the member of staff who was to receive the increase. I also find that my current direct American supervisor is far too emotional and loses composure far too easily when members of staff disagree with certain situations or have an opinion on situations and decisions, screaming and shouting at staff is not going to make FSN members of staff change their opinion and any respect she may have had will only decrease. At the time of writing I am yet to see her behave in this manner in front of a fellow American member of staff. Her style of management is not one I am familiar with. I also have a feeling that if some members of the FSN staff are under performing, some, not all, American supervisor staff seem have a “oh well I’m out of here in a few years, I’ll let the next person deal with it’ kind of attitude and do not seem to want the hassle of having to discipline the staff members who are underperforming. I feel this is not good for staff morale, especially for the members of staff who have to work alongside the underperforming member of staff. It is a feeling of total mismanagement by direct American supervisors. All of this is of course my own perception and is not a representation of all of my direct American colleagues or my fellow FSN colleagues. I will also point out that we work in a first world English speaking country and city.

236. New officers, entry level or senior, should be trained about local culture and sensitiveness. Do not assign someone without any supervisory skill or any other job experience unless s/he knows how to respect people.
237. Over the years, I have found that the American officers have become increasingly distant in their interaction with us. Unfriendly and uncomfortable with communicating—sometimes to point of being insulting. I find that to be a serious mistake as many local staff have much to contribute to professional events and relationships in their area of expertise. At the same time, there is a failure to understand that we are citizens of that country and such insensitive behavior creates a unsuccessful working environment.
238. I am proud to be part of an organization that defends freedom and respects self-determination.
239. I hope this organization improves for the better.
240. It all depends on the type of officer at post. But most of the officers are always kind, gentle, friendly and in short it’s a pleasure to work with Americans!

241. Overall, the management in our organization has been very good. I have worked with several and can attest to their high leadership skills, ability to motivate employees, and involve them effectively in the working process.
242. Supervisors should be better trained and make them understating the importance of team work! Culture differences often play a key role on this. However, during training emphasize the importance of sharing information, treating all the subordinates equally and rewarding even with a thank you the good work that the subordinates do. In my short experience working for this organization I found not many managers understanding this part of their duty. Supervisors often are chosen as a reward for their loyalty of working for so many years for the organization but this DOES not always mean that they are capable to handle that role. i.e. an employee who has very good technical skills does not mean he also has management or customer service skills . . . even if he has been working for 25 years in the same section . . .
243. Working with the American Officers is always challenging, especially as they change between 2–3 years, some officers bring a wealth of knowledge, others don't. Overall it is very interesting.
244. Officers are often doing everything to make us not feel as a “part of the family”. Your reference to the organization or to the system doesn't mean a lot for FSNs. There is no efficient system that would protect an FSN or control an American. There is no “punishment” for being a bad officer. There is no institution behind the Embassy, there is only a supervisor. If he/she is good manager you adore the place you work and vice versa. Working in the U.S Embassy and being proud is a myth. In 21st century it is all about how much you are paid, how much things can you learn and how much your supervisor respects you and assists you in your development. I doubt that the Americans know what the notion of emotional relation to their work is, unless in the contexts of promotion, salary and respect.
245. Since 2001, the working climate has changed, presumably due to the fear of terrorists, this is especially noticed by the locally employed NON-American staff. Most American officers keep more distance to the non Americans, as if we are not to be trusted anymore. The decreased funding is also showing effects, since various needs, training, new equipment, pay raises, etc. is being denied.

246. I feel grateful for the chance to work with the American community. I don't spend a great deal of time with them but they are always gracious and thankful for my work.
247. There's a big difference between Americans and Local Staff. A bad example is the medical benefits available to local staff. The U.S. Government can improve how Local Staff are treated in terms of medical care.
248. The State Department should better look at the RESULTS of FSN work.
249. The relationship is good in terms of management and supervision.
250. I have the impression that there are policies that are not flexible. They are dictated on U.S. Missions overseas with no room for discussion. This is a big organization that should take the lead in all matters related to the welfare its employees. Sometimes the organization does not respond to the needs of employees in a timely manner and this is probably caused by too much "centralization" in Washington offices that are not aware of the realities in the field.
251. State Department has great amount of supervisory skills training. I wish every new officer coming to post would take one of these courses and follow its recommendations (concerning communication, feedback, conflict resolution and delegation) while dealing with subordinates.
252. There are some officers who would like to terrorize the employee by saying, "you will be fired" this makes the employee feel insecure. Especially in African country like us, they believe that they can get employees easily. The good things is that he/she will be replaced by others every two or three years.
253. I like working with the Americans since they treat me very friendly. I sometimes tell my compatriots they are kinder than my own compatriots.
254. My embassy is structured in such a way that it appears the hierarchy is more important than any good idea or project because it gets lost in the many layers it has to go through to reach a decision-making level. American officers appear to be too reluctant to be pro-active or to recommend ideas from FSN's to management. Too often, they see FSN's as mere tools for realizing their ideas and executing their orders. That can be tiring!
255. Americans should understand that in order to produce worthwhile results they must partner with their FSN's. There has been a strong change against this in recent years.

256. Our last manager in the Embassy micro-managed a lot, causing great frustration. I don't have any issue with supervision, this is okay. On many occasions, when it comes to advising I don't offer my opinion because I know the managers have already made up their minds. Although I like my organization and love Americans, I can't speak highly of my job because there are many policy issues that are considered to be hostile for my country and the general new population is very anti-American when it comes to involvement in the area.
257. The relationship between the American officers and the FSN's is often quite difficult. FSN's usually know their local circumstances and programs better, but for the Americans (supervisor) this often difficult to admit. On the other hand, without the strong leadership qualities of the American supervisors, FSN's often don't feel responsible for anything nor do they have initiative, and the team spirit suffers. In my opinion this is due to the hierarchical structure of the State Department. FSN's are not getting the feeling that they are seen as equally important and are not given major responsibilities. For FSN's there is no possibility in the system to gain higher positions and advance their careers. After 10 years they have reached the max. pay level. That is why many really good people leave after a couple of years. Most American officer's top priority on the job is their own profession, their next evaluation and to achieve the next grade. Therefore, sometimes the programs suffer from the reluctance to really fight for something because it could harm their career.
258. Americans should be smarter and better trained. In addition, they should also develop a greater sense for the local culture because American culture is not paramount.
259. I want it to be known that I care as much as the Americans about the fate of this organization, if not more since I am the institutional memory of the organization—not them. I wish the State department would read the outcome of this research and improve the human relationship at posts.
260. I have noted a sharp decline in morale post-wide in the last five years that affects performance and motivation.

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