METHOD C: <u>THE REP GRID THEORY</u>
How do you view other cultures?

Purpose
Confronting a person with one's own (hidden) perception/ constructs on other cultures

Prior conditions
1. To enable people to be open and honest it's better that the participants feel safe together. The leader of the exercise should emphasize that the exercise is not about judging each other, but about realizing what's hidden in your subconscious.
2. Number of participants: 1-4
3. Cards with strengths and weaknesses
   Post-its and a pen
4. 45 minutes

Procedure
A) Choose your values
1. Take a look at the list of strengths and weaknesses.
2. Choose a strength you like to see in other people and take this card.
3. Search for an opposite and take also this card.
4. Place those cards in opposite corners on the table.

B) Rank the cultures
1. Take 5/ 6 post-its.
2. Write on each post-it a culture you encounter frequently in your life. Those different cultures can be based on religion, ethnicity, social background, etc.
3. Rank the post-its between the opposites from weakest to strongest. Try to be honoust and don't judge!

Repeat the procedures A and B 3/ 4 times. Keep the same cultures, but select new opposite values. Place those lines under the first line. Stay honest and don't judge. After doing this, answer the next questions:
- Which cultures are ranked more often towards to the stronger side?
- Which cultures are ranked more often towards to the weaker side?
- What factors (events/media/story's/etc.) have influenced these thoughts?
- How do these thoughts influence your (professional) behaviour?

Theoretical background: **Personal Construction Theory** (PCT):

The key message of the Personal Construction Theory is that the world is 'perceived' by a person in terms of whatever 'meaning' that person applies to it, the so called constructs. *Constructs* are "transparent patterns or templets which he creates and then attempts to fit over the realities of which the world is composed. Ways of construing the world... Constructs are used for prediction of things to come, and the world keeps rolling along and revealing these predictions to be either correct or misleading. This fact provides the basis for revision of constructs and, eventually, of whole construction systems."

The theory says that a person has the *freedom to choose* a different 'meaning' of whatever he or she wants. In other words, as suggested by George Kelly, the original proponent of the theory, the person has the 'freedom to choose' the meaning that one prefers or likes. He called this *alternative constructivism*. In simple words, the person is capable of applying alternative constructions (meanings) to any events in the past, present or future. The person is not a prisoner of one's 'biography or past' and could liberate oneself from the misery of 'miserable' events if one desires by reconstruing (reinterpreting and redefining) them. The theory rejects the existing schism between affect, cognition, and action and recommends that they be construed together for developing a fuller understanding of human behavior.

George Kelly, the original proponent of PCT suggested that PCT is based on the model of *man-the-scientist* (1955). Within this model,

- the individual creates his or her own ways of seeing the world in which he lives; the world does not create them for him;
- (s)he builds *constructs* and tries them on for size;
- the constructs are sometimes organized into systems, group of constructs which embody subordinate and superordinate relationships;
- the same events can often be viewed in the light of two or more systems, yet the events do not belong to any system; and
- the individual's practical systems have particular foci and limited ranges of convenience.

PCT doesn't ignore the relevance of the social context and the constraints imposed by it on personal construction: "But to believe that man is the author of his destiny is not to deny that he may be tragically limited by circumstances. I saw too many unfortunate youngsters, some of them literally starving in that depression-ridden dust bowl, for me not to be aware of their tragic limitations. Clearly there were many things they might have liked to do that circumstances would not permit. But, nevertheless, this is not to say that they were victims of circumstances. However, much there was denied them there was still an infinity of possibilities open to them. The task was to generate the imagination needed to envision those possibilities" (cited in Fransella 1995).

The contrast between the individual reality, social reality and shared reality is implied in the following distinctions noted by Kelly.

Individuality: "persons differ from each other in their construction of events."

Communality: "to the extent one person employs a construction of experience which is similar to that employed by another, his psychological processes are similar to those of the other person."

Socialty: "to the extent that one person construes the construction processes of another, he may play a role in a social process involving the other person."