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A summary and interpretation

What does  
soulcloud mean  
and what are we  
talking about?

“less is more” is a basic lifestyle attitude towards our consumer society. It is also however a principle applied to many other areas such as fashion, interior design but also nutrition.

In this project, however, I used the statement “less is more” in a completely different context and asked the question: “What remains when you remove external influences such as social status or belongings? Seen interculturally, what sociological aspects, ideas and goals agree? But also what striking differences become visible?”

Does this reduction create a “less”, a commonality for all, which can then become the “more” for everyone? I received answers such as these and some additional ones from many different people. In addition to completely personal answers and opinions, representative infographics are also printed in this booklet. They present statistics from the World Value Survey, which asked some similar questions.

Due to the complexity and multifarious nature of the topic, I see this work merely as an approximation. It remains however interesting to discover what is created from the collection of all these answers and whether a link can be made between these numerous, individual values.

For perhaps in the summary of all the statements there is something in the overlap which reminds us a little of a common soulcloud.

I wish you a lot of fun with your discoveries!

Daniel Schaber

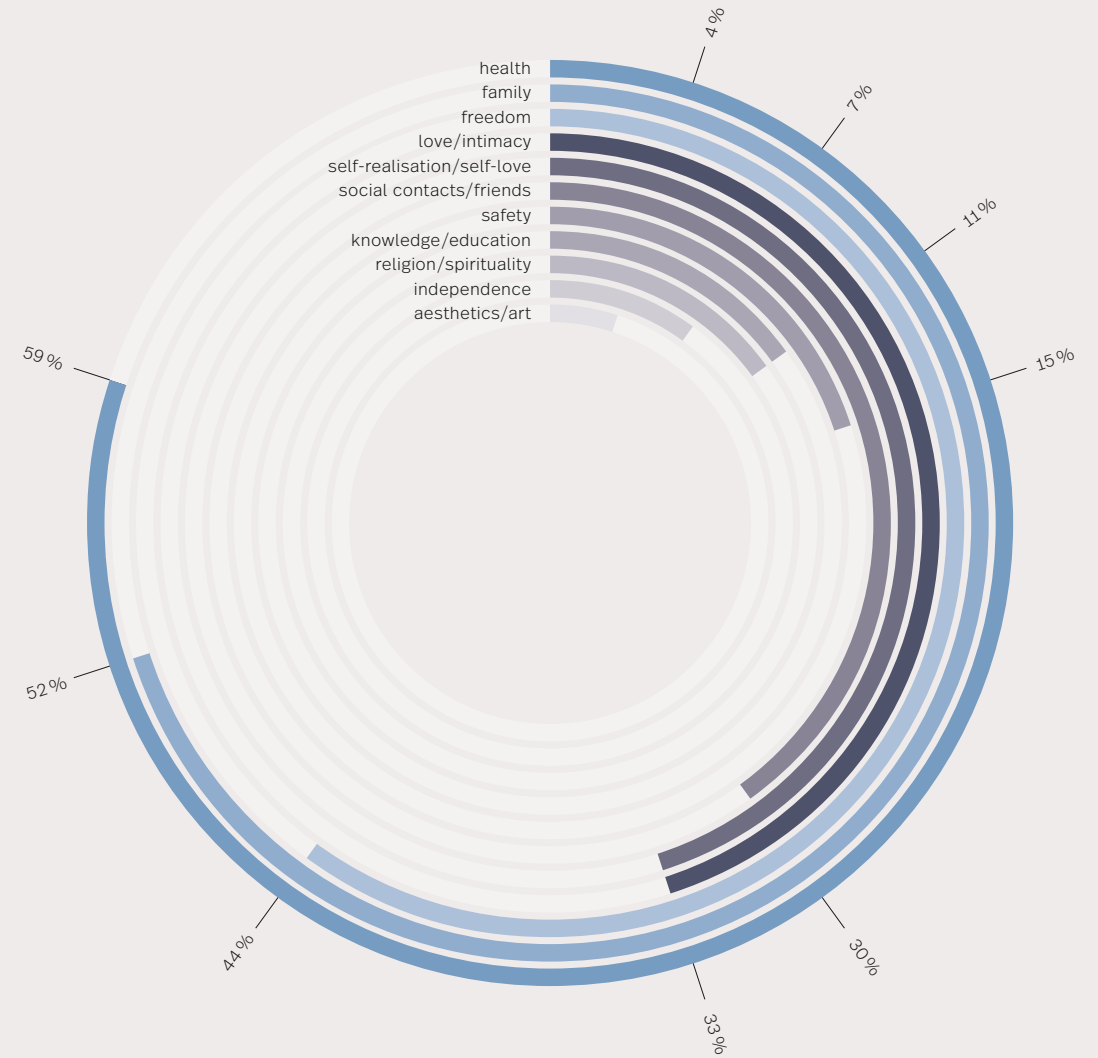
souideas

I asked people from my surroundings four questions. People with different backgrounds: people who have lived in different cultures but also people who were born and raised in countries with different cultural roots.

27 people,  
15 female  
and 12 male,  
between 20  
and 40 years old:

- Australia
- Austria
- Bosnia
- Croatia
- Denmark
- Ecuador
- England
- France
- Germany
- Ghana
- Italy
- Iran
- Iceland
- Japan
- Lebanon
- Philippines
- Poland
- Russia
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- Spain
- Sri Lanka
- South Africa
- South Korea
- Syria
- Turkey
- Tunisia
- USA
- Venezuela

Which of these  
values is the  
most important  
to you?



# Which immaterial goal in life do you follow?

I want to be happy.

**Rebecca (31), female,  
born and raised in Germany  
with Croatian roots**

Be happy with myself as  
a person, be healthy.  
“Work hard, love harder  
and be kind.”

**Amber (22), female,  
born and raised in England**

Happiness and satisfaction.

**Enina (25), female,  
born and raised in Bosnia**

Stay happy. For me, family,  
health and security are  
the basics for staying happy.

**Sarah (26), female,  
born and raised in Germany  
with Tunisian roots**

Be happy and satisfied and  
to do some good for people  
who are close to me.

**Darja (28), female,  
born and raised in Russia**

I would like to be happy.

**Sascha (29), male,  
born and raised in Germany,  
now living in Switzerland**

My goals are to be happy  
and free, and to develop  
myself and to learn.

**Valentin (24), male,  
from France**

Contentment.

**Carina (29), female,  
born and raised in Germany,  
currently living in Austria**

Gain knowledge, travel,  
learn all I can in general  
and be as open as  
possible to understand  
and tolerate cultures,  
ideas and thoughts  
different from my own.

**Marilyn (28), female,  
born and raised in Venezuela**

I want to do things that  
make me happy.

**Oliver (27), male,  
born and raised in Germany  
with Ghanaian and Polish roots**

Build meaningful relation-  
ships, learn new things  
and have new and exciting  
experiences. Sounds like  
lofty goals but I think  
that I can say that I do try  
and live by that.

**Andri (28), male,  
born and raised in Iceland  
currently living in Denmark**

Experience as much as  
possible, regret as little  
as possible.

**Ann-Sophie (24), female,  
born and raised in Germany,  
lived in France and Spain  
for several years**

Living a life filled with  
happiness. Happiness  
cannot be measured by  
material things, but by  
things like “love”, “health”,  
or “success”. You have  
to define “happiness” for  
yourself and not compare  
yourself with others. That  
can make you unhappy!

**Catherin (28), female,  
born and raised in Germany  
with Filipino roots**

Start a family.

**Marte (25), female,  
born and raised in Germany.  
A part of her family now lives  
in Sweden**

Parenthood. Make life  
better for my loved ones.  
Fraternising. Sharing  
knowledge.

**Joan (37), male, from Spain**

My family’s well-being.

**Kanako (35), female, born and  
raised in Japan, lived several  
years in Germany and Italy.  
Now lives in the USA.**

Live together with the  
woman I love, have children  
and be able to fulfil our-  
selves as well as within the  
family. Basically, I follow  
my personal “happiness”.

**Sam (27), male,  
born and raised in Germany  
and Ecuador**

I would like to gain the  
approval of others through  
my work, which I love doing.

**Jihee (28), female,  
born and raised in South Korea**

Success.

**Dilan (38), male,  
born and raised in Sri Lanka**

My goal is to improve my  
German until it becomes  
like my mother tongue.  
Be successful, be in touch  
with friends and simply  
be happy.

**Nazafarin (26), female,  
born and raised in Iran**

The new goal and thus the  
new success in life is in my  
opinion mental health and  
inner peace. Happiness is  
in the details. Have healthy  
(happy) thoughts, take  
steps wisely, protect your  
heart, perceive your energy,  
and restful sleep is impor-  
tant. In this way, things will  
always work out irrelevant  
of what happens. The  
goal is of course to always  
become a better person.

**Eda (24), female,  
born and raised in Germany  
with Turkish roots**

Personal skills growth.

**Thato (32) male,  
from South Africa**

In a material world it  
is difficult to talk of  
immaterial things. I don’t  
know whether I can answer  
that since at the moment I  
am in a dialogue with myself.  
But I do believe one of the  
immaterial goals I follow  
is to be who I am. To shape  
my personality and my  
identity the way I want to.  
However, you need the right  
surroundings which permit  
you to do that.

**Mateusz (23), male,  
born and raised in Poland**

My goal is to find inner  
calm and peace.

**Manuel (32), male,  
born and raised in Germany**

Inner peace.

**Ahmad (23), male,  
born and raised in Syria**

I don’t follow any  
immaterial goals.

**Mia (30), female,  
born and raised in South Korea  
currently living in Australia**

Never hurt anyone!

**Rawad (29) male,  
born and raised in Lebanon**

## In your opinion, what binds us all together?

Love and empathy.

**Enina (25), female,  
born and raised in Bosnia**

We are united by humanity  
and compassion.

**Darja (28), female,  
born and raised in Russia**

Humanity and equality, the  
love and feelings of people,  
belief in (the one) God  
(regardless of religion) and  
common sense (for those  
who still have some).

**Eda (24), female,  
born and raised in Germany  
with Turkish roots**

Honesty, similarities  
such as humanity, culture  
and language.

**Jihee (28), female,  
born and raised in South Korea**

Empathy and respect.

**Thato (32) male,  
from South Africa**

Love.

**Dilan (38), male,  
born and raised in Sri Lanka**

Love. Simply being a good  
person. A smile can mean  
everything. Giving and  
receiving love, being there  
for each other.

**Nazafarin (26), female,  
born and raised in Iran**

Care.

**Rawad (29) male,  
born and raised in Lebanon**

So many factors play a role  
such as cultural, social and  
country-specific aspects  
but also historical circum-  
stances and manifesta-  
tions in society. I would  
say that people strive to be  
different from each other  
rather than find a similarity.  
However, I could imagine  
that we can sometimes all  
meet on some simple  
human level, when we are  
not too strongly influenced  
by the things I have just  
mentioned. I think there is  
a small, narrow humanist  
intersection we can agree  
on and where we can meet.  
The word to describe it  
perhaps is empathy.

**Mateusz (23), male,  
born and raised in Poland**

The need for social  
integration.

**Carina (29), female,  
born and raised in Germany,  
currently living in Austria**

We are all united by the  
desire for a happy and ful-  
filled life. This is the same  
for all human beings insofar  
as we desire the fulfilment  
of basic needs: eating,  
drinking, sleeping and  
shelter must be guaranteed  
first and foremost. Then  
comes social fulfilment  
such as family and friends.  
Only then, I think, come the  
deep emotional needs,  
such as security and self-  
realisation.

**Oliver (27), male,  
born and raised in Germany  
with Ghanaian and Polish roots**

We all have the same basic  
needs regardless of hair  
and skin colour or religion.

**Catherin (28), female,  
born and raised in Germany  
with Filipino roots**

We all have similar physical  
and anatomical features  
and the same ancestors.

We have similar basic needs,  
need oxygen to breathe,  
food and drink to live, and  
are born in order some day  
to die. Only in our traits and  
characteristics do we differ  
a lot. Everyone has different  
interests, desires, goals  
and fears – but perhaps it's  
these differences which  
bind us all.

**Ann-Sophie (24), female,  
born and raised in Germany  
and lived in France and Spain  
for several years**

I am more aware of the  
differences, there are  
certainly similarities sub-  
consciously. Cultures are  
basically very similar.

**Marte (25), female,  
born and raised in Germany.  
A part of her family now lives  
in Sweden**

I am struggling with this  
question. I almost want to  
say that we are not all  
bound together. I might not  
be spiritual enough. That  
being said, I think there are  
different things that can  
bind different people  
together – that is, there can  
be something you can share  
or bond over with almost  
everyone, but different  
things with different people.

**Andri (28), male,  
born and raised in Iceland  
currently living in Denmark**

I don't think there's some-  
thing that binds all of  
us, but what we all have  
is desires – positive or  
negative – and we are work-  
ing on them. On the path to  
those desires, we are  
somehow all connected.

**Kanako (35), female, born and  
raised in Japan, lived several  
years in Germany and Italy.  
Now lives in the USA.**

I think that we are con-  
nected by a basic curiosity  
and the need to be treated  
“well”/to be loved. A some-  
what esoteric connection  
which I find nice somehow,  
is that in the end all life and  
existence originated from  
a sort of “super sun”. We are  
all somehow children of  
the sun.

**Manuel (32), male,  
born and raised in Germany**

The desire to be perceived  
and accepted by other  
people. Basically, nobody  
wants to be alone. Each  
of us longs to find some-  
body who is witness to his  
or her life. Besides, we all  
need a certain intimacy  
and affection.

**Sam (27), male,  
born and raised in Germany  
and Ecuador**

We are all united by the  
meaning of life. The contin-  
uing formation of our souls  
while we dwell on Earth.

**Sascha (29), male,  
born and raised in Germany,  
now living in Switzerland**

Security and health. They  
are the basic needs of  
people irrespective of cul-  
ture or origin.

**Sarah (26), female,  
born and raised in Germany  
with Tunisian roots**

Peace, sport, music,  
movies and unfortunately  
also catastrophes.

**Valentin (24), male,  
from France**

Family as a social construct  
as well as human rights.

**Joan (37), male,  
from Spain**

Balance.

**Ahmad (23), male,  
Born and raised in Syria**

Communication.

**Rebecca (31), female,  
born and raised in Germany  
with Croatian roots**

DNA, carbon and water, life  
itself, a consciousness,  
feelings and opinions, the  
history of human beings.

**Amber (22), female,  
born and raised in England**

Humour, laughter.

**Marilyn (28), female,  
born and raised in Venezuela**

You will always find good  
people among shitty people.

**Mia (30), female,  
born and raised in South Korea  
currently living in Australia**

# In what parts of life do you find the greatest differences compared to other cultures?

If I were to name a concrete example, then it would be friends from Syria who cannot understand that I spend so much time on my studies and at university and our meetings have to be limited (e.g. to a coffee). The question is rather comprehensive since there are so many small differences between cultures, which is why it's so exciting to learn about other cultures.

**Manuel (32), male,  
born and raised in Germany**

Attitude towards performance.

**Catherin (28), female,  
born and raised in Germany  
with Filipino roots**

I think the greatest differences are in the education systems.

**Mia (30), female,  
born and raised in South Korea  
currently living in Australia**

I see great differences in work culture e.g. working atmosphere, working hours or relations with colleagues.

**Jihee (28), female,  
born and raised in South Korea**

I find the most essential differences in the areas of "career" and "family".

**Oliver (27), male,  
born and raised in Germany  
with Ghanaian and Polish roots**

Career opportunities and lifestyle generally.

**Enina (25), female,  
born and raised in Bosnia**

What I can say is that at least in Europe there is a Western culture which seems to be rather advanced and differs from Eastern cultures. In my opinion, in the West, success and hyper-individualism often come first, for many people.. Traditional, institutional religion is losing its significance. So other "religions" are advancing: body culture, veganism, etc. In the East, it is still different (but will not be for long): there, Christianity has not been worn away as much and society and family is more important. This is because it has not yet reached the same social point as in Western nations. One should also say that Eastern European cultures (leaving Russia out of it) are strongly oriented towards the West and the same phenomena which for us are normality are now occurring.

**Mateusz (23), male,  
born and raised in Poland**

In other cultures, women still do not have equality with men. They are still not allowed to carry out certain professions.

**Catherin (28), female,  
born and raised in Germany  
with Filipino roots**

I see differences in the fields of religion, politics and economics.

**Darja (28), female,  
born and raised in Russia**

Social conduct, I think.

It's always easiest for one individual to compare generalised social conduct from culture to culture.

**Thato (32) male,  
from South Africa**

For me, cultures differ mainly in their traditions and customs. Then, there are of course the obvious differences such as language, which covers both verbal and non-verbal communication. But in addition to body language, mimicry and gestures, cultures can also differ in their values, their religious orientations and their lifestyles.

**Ann-Sophie (24), female,  
born and raised in Germany,  
lived in France and Spain  
for several years**

Social contact.

**Dilan (38), male,  
born and raised in Sri Lanka**

The greatest differences between Germany and Switzerland in my opinion are to be found in the social environment. Here, in Switzerland, people look to themselves and their own. People have a hostile attitude towards strangers.

**Sascha (29), male,  
born and raised in Germany,  
now living in Switzerland**

I am running a very busy, rigid schedule but the Danes around me seem a lot more relaxed. I always try and be careful about politics and religion when I sense there is a big cultural divide. On a lighter note, I have also observed a big cultural difference in attitudes towards having children. Saying you don't want to have children in Iceland and Denmark is totally fine, whereas I have sensed it as being less acceptable in a lot of places.

**Andri (28), male,  
born and raised in Iceland  
currently living in Denmark**

There is a big difference between Iran and Germany. In Iran, family and emotions are particularly important. You quickly find friends in Iran but there is always the question of whether they are real friends. Here, it takes a little longer to make friends but then it's more real. Free speech and freedom in general is something I missed in Iran.

**Nazafarin (26), female,  
born and raised in Iran**

I don't see families sticking together or the importance of family values being as well formed in all cultures but there are similarities.

**Sarah (26), female,  
born and raised in Germany  
with Tunisian roots**

In relationships, with money, in trade, the way of arguing, and questioning and evaluating life.

**Ahmad (23), male,  
born and raised in Syria**

From my experiences after school or college, once you are supposed to take on your responsibilities, this is the most different area of the life compared to other cultures, American or European. In Japanese society, the pressure of being "usual/normal" is still very strong. After you have finished your studies, you should get a job, find a partner then get married and have a child. In other cultures, it seems less so and society respects individual life.

**Kanako (35), female, born and raised in Japan, lived several years in Germany and Italy. Now lives in the USA.**

You often notice the differences between Western and Eastern families. Mostly in their size, their togetherness and their identification with the family itself. Another aspect is work and study. The approach to projects or keeping appointments is different from culture to culture. I have often noticed differences in meal culture, e.g. from table manners to greetings.

**Sam (27), male,  
born and raised in Germany  
and Ecuador**

Finances.

**Rebecca (31), female,  
born and raised in Germany  
with Croatian roots**

History, spirituality and technology play an important role when we talk about differences.

**Valentin (24), male,  
from France**

From my cultural perspective, the difference starts with the attitude towards different areas of life. This is strongly formed by the religious influence.

**Eda (24), female,  
born and raised in Germany  
with Turkish roots**

I embrace the difference!

**Rawad (29) male,  
born and raised in Lebanon**

Non-verbal communication.

**Joan (37), male,  
from Spain**

There are cultures that are very different and others that tend to be closer to mine. I would say culinary aspects, religion and beliefs as well as general behaviour in society (e.g. what is accepted as normal and what is not).

**Marilyn (28), female,  
born and raised in Venezuela**

You can find parallels in all cultures, the focus is just different.

**Amber (22), female,  
born and raised in England**



soulwords

# An interview with Prof Dr Norbert M. Schmitz about intercultural differences and similarities.

**When we look at the world as a whole, we tend to increasingly focus on intercultural diversity and differences. It is often said in this context: "other countries, other customs". In which areas do you find the clearest intercultural differences?**

I find the intercultural differences to be very great. The more you get to know a country, the clearer they become. I have experienced this with my French partner of many years. One would think that the intercultural differences – apart from French women being very charming – are not too great but the longer we got to know each other, the clearer these differences became, e.g. the different expectations regarding family structures.

When you meet someone from a completely different culture, it is even more extreme. What you notice most clearly is the hierarchical structures. It is very striking how humbly you are greeted as a German professor in India for example. In this case, of course, you are at the top.

**Are these not also essential historical, changeable manifestations?**

I'm a universalist and was once a great opponent of multicultural ideas because I don't believe in the equality of cultures. I rather assume that it is to do with modernity, which is above all cultures, including our own.

By modernity, I mean those forms of human rights as expressed in the demands for "freedom, equality, fraternity – or as in the US Constitution "the pursuit of happiness".

For we should remember: the greatest differences we know are towards ourselves – as enlightened and modern people towards our own traditional culture. For example, we accept unconditionally the equal rights of women.

The fact that this is different from our great-grandparents is, in a way, the cultural hole we do not even notice. We believe that our high standards of freedom have always been self-evident. They have not been. Certainly not in Germany.

**In other cultures, freedom is still not self-evident today...**

As a lover of the Orient, who grew up with the tales of 1001 nights, I find the difference in the cultural and folkloristic sense something that I greatly love.

But it cannot be transferred to our social and humanitarian circumstances. In fact, I assume that the desire for freedom, which had to be met with such painful and bloody sacrifice in our culture, is the claim of all people. I see for example the conflicts in the Middle East completely in this sense.

In the long run, I am an optimistic person. However, when I gave some Syrian war refugees an insight into the history and culture of my hometown at the Düsseldorf Gemäldegalerie I remember they were frightened by a picture of a brutal village plundering from the endless 'Thirty Years' War and called out "Kobane!" The Syrian-Kurdish city had been the scene of fierce fighting with the fanatics of the "Islamic State".

Afterwards, I was asked by one of the refugees how much time i would apply to make also this "Arab religious and civil war" come to an end.

It is about balance and mediation and not about egalitarianism in the negative sense. It is about the salvation of cultures with regard to their own claims. I know that this is an altercation which does not happen without conflict and I hope that at the end of it all a small part of those cultures I so idolise will be preserved.

The sad thing is it took at least 200 or even 500 years for Europe to arrive at this form of peace, which we now take for granted as our identity.

**Some of the differences often lead to misunderstandings and thus to distance, do they not?**

A pragmatic obstacle is often language but it is not interesting to discuss it here. We should start with the hypothetical case that this purely verbal barrier does not exist.

Incidentally, I am always impressed by our East-Asian students who seem to master the incredible distance between these language groups.

The misunderstandings here are very specific – it depends on which cultural spaces clash here.

Pragmatically, from a Central European perspective, they are undoubtedly strongest with the East-Asians. This is partly due to the strict hierarchies mentioned which prevail there. Thus, almost automatically, from my own pedagogical and political aspirations, I imply that students from Japan, China or South Korea have a certain autonomy which would be almost unthinkable in East Asia. This is certainly the main miscomprehension.

This is sometimes really strange because you understand yourself superficially since you know the vocabulary and the grammar, but not the "social grammar". It's about a permanent act of appropriation which we must be made aware of again and again. Also in the observation of ourselves.

It is something else for example when you have students from Islamic countries, such as Persia. Here, I must confess that I am extremely fond of the Persian culture of courtesy. I was allowed to experience this in Iran itself.

As far as intercultural behaviour on this level is concerned, I learn from my counterpart there and sometimes wish that this were the natural way of doing things here as well.

The rewards are not always one-sided however, they are mutual. I personally find it incredibly rewarding to be able to teach students from all over the world.

I myself have a decided preference to encourage students to report on the art, culture or design in their home countries. That's how I learn a lot, to create tension out of the whole thing. In this respect, after growing up in an immigrant district, I find an intercultural encounter with its problems enriching – also in my work as a theorist.

**There is a quote by Barack Obama: “What binds us together is greater than what drives us apart”.**

The danger of universalism – that is, the position I represent – is that it leads to superficial egalitarianism. The opposite multicultural danger is that people in their identities are entrenched in themselves. It is therefore always necessary to create a balance between these two things.

When you say in America – and I say that as a great admirer of Barack Obama – “What binds us together is greater than what drives us apart”, then it always remains in this tension.

The sentence is of course correct, but what is formulated in this commonality? It is incredibly difficult to keep this balancing act between cultural diversity and universal equality. For a long time, America has been a great role model in this regard.

I love New York because it is almost unique in its cultural diversity and at the same time there is nothing stricter than the traffic regulations of New York’s city authority. When you put that together, you’re really at the point we should get to. One could also rightly say that the United States of America is the model for the United States of the World.

Unfortunately, in recent years – and I don’t just meant the Trump era – this has been reflected in a break-up of “cultural citadels”, as Karl Otto Werckmeister called it. You can observe this in university life especially.

I think it is very dangerous, because that, in turn, gives ammunition to the corresponding, right-wing political forces.

**If we leave this more socio-political approach and, in the sense of the “less is more” project, separate people from their external influences such as social status or personal belongings, does one not find the similarities expressed in Obama’s quotation.**

The question cannot be answered in a certain sense because it always aims at something different from every human being, from every aspect one encounters with a human being.

In a deeper sense, people are always what they find in artefacts. They are also what they process. People are what they communicate and concretely express. They are also what they show us at home – insofar as they are a part of the kingdom of freedom and are freed from pure necessity. The beggars of Calcutta, however, have no way to represent themselves in these things.

“less is more” – if you use it wisely – at best does not simply mean nothing but rather it means developing an economy of things which allows for an adequate self-representation of each individual.

The fact that we have such beautiful things as fashion, or the ability to communicate in a very sensual way, is wonderful.

The other side of the coin is the international social and environmental devastation in the field of consumption in garment production, and our simultaneous inability to deal with these expensive things in our private lives.

So it’s about finding a balance. If you look in a wardrobe in Germany, then “less is more” becomes pretty obvious. But how far do I go and where does it start to overturn?

**I interviewed different people on the aspects most important to them personally, and received “self-love” as an answer, in addition to family and a closer social environment.**

The Greek philosopher Epicurus, to whom I am very grateful, teaches dietics as the art of the good life, which is not to negate oneself as a Christian or to deny oneself from being a Buddhist, but to accept this concrete earthly life in all its limitations, in all its transience.

First and foremost, this includes care of oneself. However, not in the misunderstanding, as if care of oneself were a hopeless egoism, consumerism or the like. It means exactly the opposite. Namely, the idea that I can experience in moderation the deep pleasures of the sensual, of social life at all.

When cheap psychological advice books talk about self-love, I always become a little sceptical. Or when a marriage counsellor repeatedly tells couples to part, because the partners do not fit together one hundred percent. Then, you are happy because one of the therapists has said, what a great person you are and you should not only think of your stupid partner, but finally of yourself. However, if everyone did that, there would soon be no more partnerships.

One has to understand that it is so to speak an interaction, work on oneself which can make others happy and which enables them to make us happy.

**Has the value concept all over the world changed in the last few decades?**

If you are pessimistic, you can always observe things which show a negative trend.

I think the problem is that in a consumer society we are developing a form of egotism which is damaging in many aspects. Gerhard Schulze termed it the “Event Society”.

If one makes egotism out of individualism, then society will eventually collapse. Maybe not catastrophically, but rather from the inside out, but that’s the real danger.

However, the event society is actually – and Schultze also hopes – a wonderful possibility through which individuals can realise themselves as individuals equally through the wealth, liberalism and freedom we have in our society.

This ambivalence is a little reminiscent of the false reading of Epicurus, who preached not excessive enjoyment, but the moderation and awareness of every little enjoyment.

It is about an ethics of consumption not only for ourselves, but also for all society and nature.

**In summary, would you say that the differences or similarities prevail?**

As much as I love the differences, I would say that the common ground of humanity is the foundation of our humanity.

**Far away from consumption and personal status, what is your life’s goal?**

L’amour.

**Dr Norbert M. Schmitz**

Professor for Aesthetics at Muthesius University, Kiel. Art and media scientist. Teaching activities at universities and art academies in Wuppertal, Bochum, Erlangen, Linz and Zürich. Work on the questions of the intermediality of fine arts and film, the iconology of old and new media, the discourse history of art studies, the art system and media theory, the methodology of modern image science; focus: classical film history, avant-garde film and the cultural history of modernism.

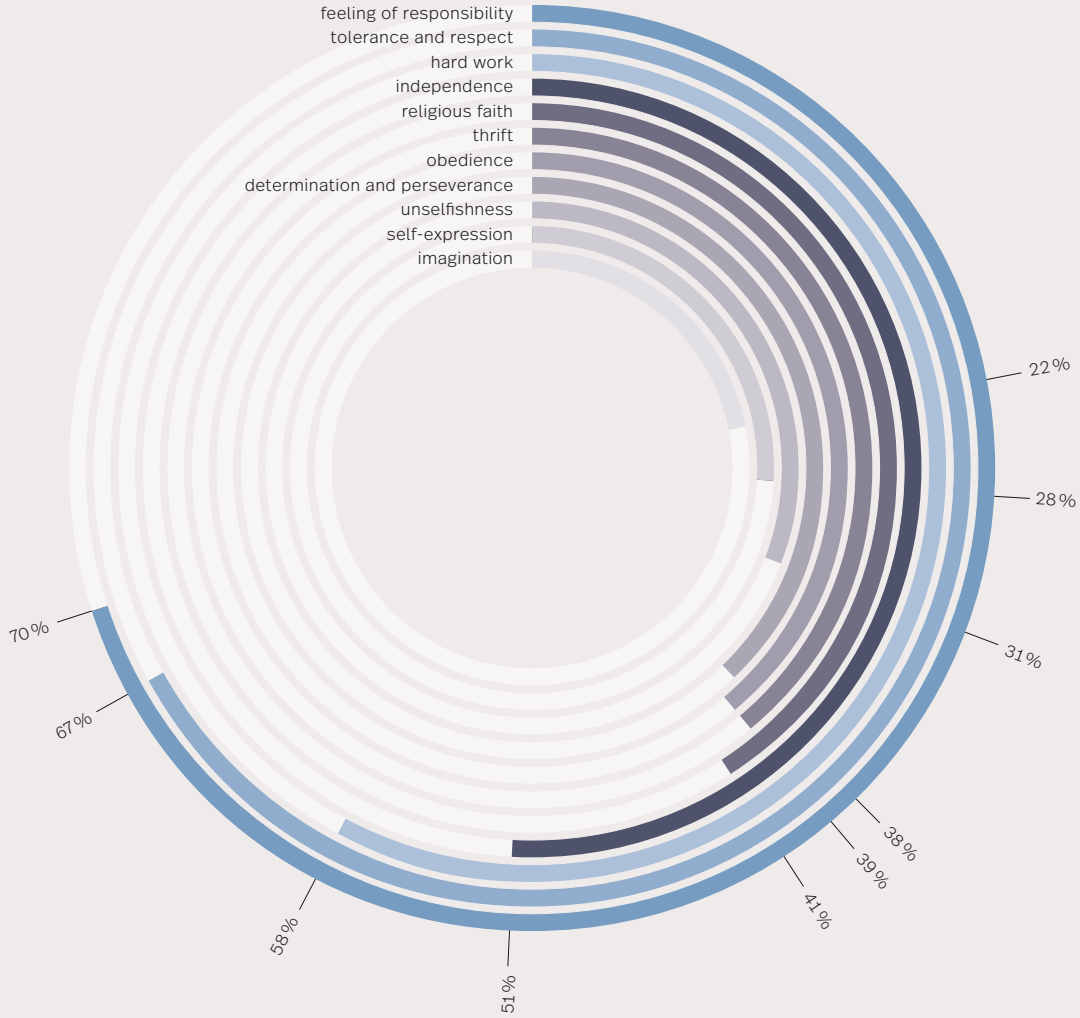
soulgraphs

The World Values Survey is a global network of social scientists studying changing values and their impact on social and political life, led by an international team of scholars, with the WVS association and secretariat headquartered in Stockholm, Sweden.

The survey, which started in 1981, seeks to use the most rigorous, high-quality research designs in each country. The WVS consists of nationally representative surveys conducted in almost 100 countries, which contain almost 90 percent of the world's population, using a common questionnaire. The WVS is the largest non-commercial, cross-national, time series investigation of human beliefs and values ever executed, currently including interviews with almost 400,000 respondents. Moreover, the WVS is the only academic study covering the full range of global variations, from very poor to very rich countries, in all of the world's major cultural zones.

worldvaluessurvey.org

Which of these qualities\*, if any, do you consider to be especially important?

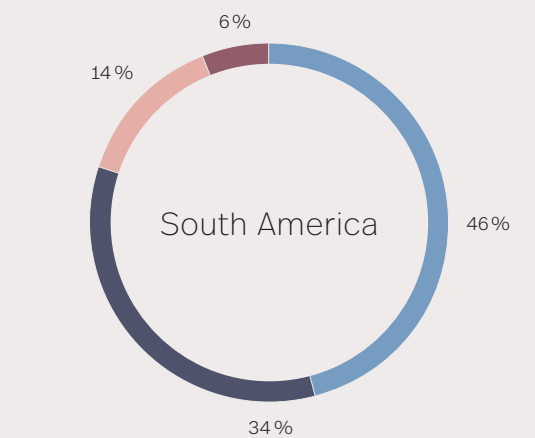
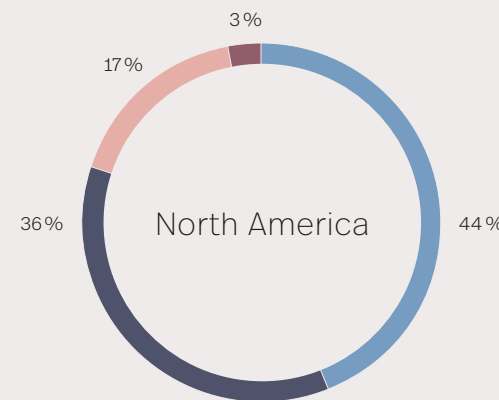
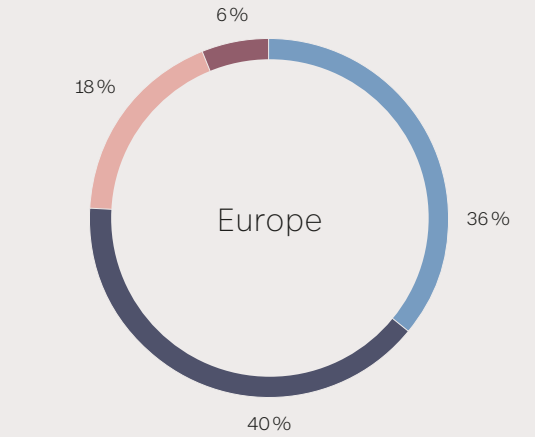
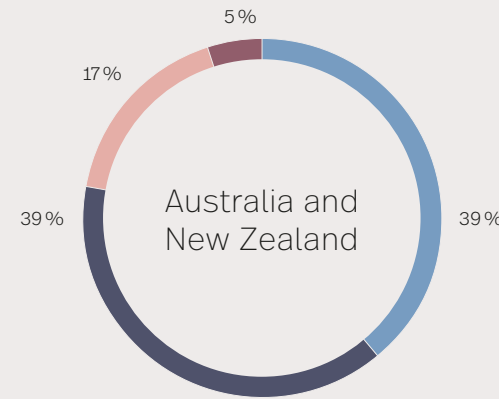
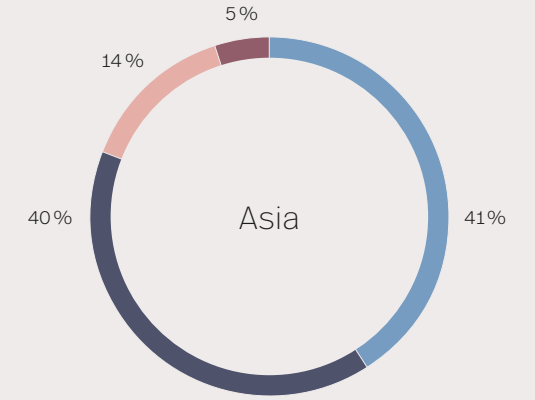
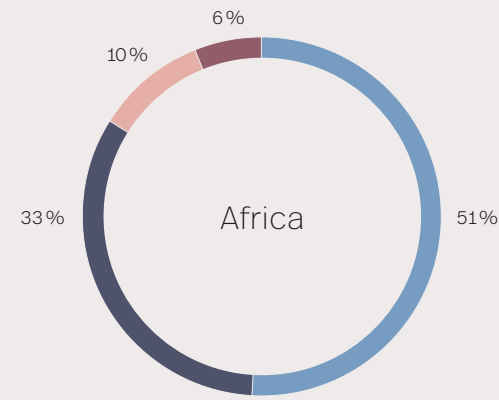


\*qualities that children can be encouraged to learn at home, figures in total (2010-2014)

How often,  
if at all, do you think  
about the meaning  
and purpose of life?

In the global average, 42% of those questioned indicated they often thought about the meaning of life. A further 37% said they sometimes think about it. 15% of said they seldom think about it and merely 5% never.

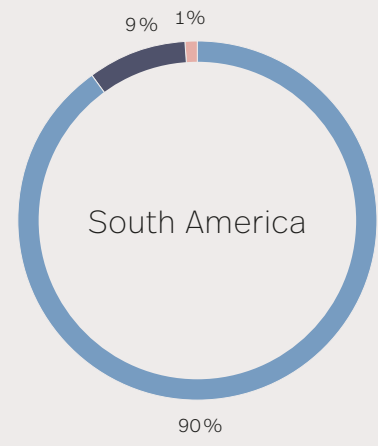
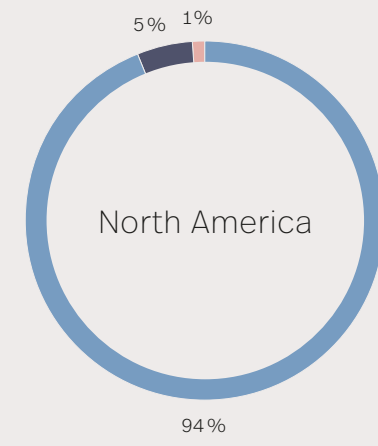
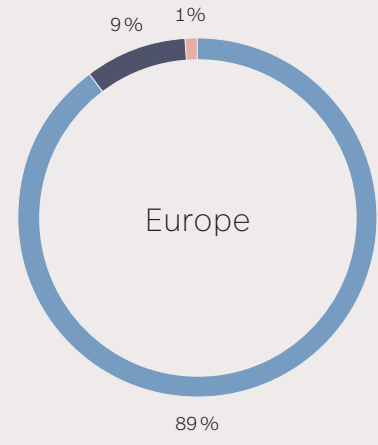
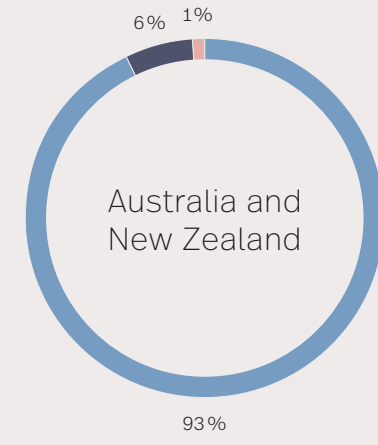
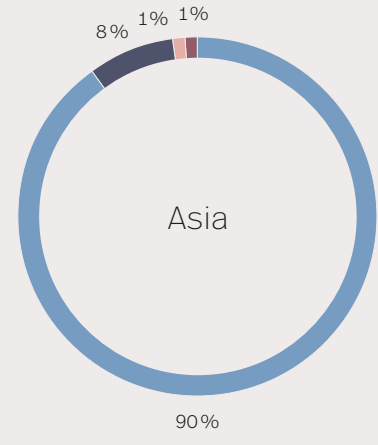
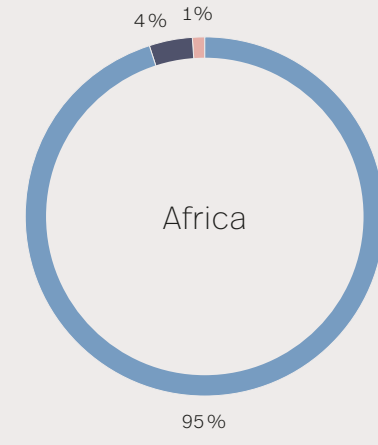
Source: World Value Survey, 2010–2014  
● often ● sometimes ● rarely ● never



# How important, would you say, is family in your life?

The answers here give a clear indication: an average of 92% of those questioned feel family is very important and 7% rather important. A mere 1% gave the answer "not very important". The value for the answer "not important at all" was on average 0%.

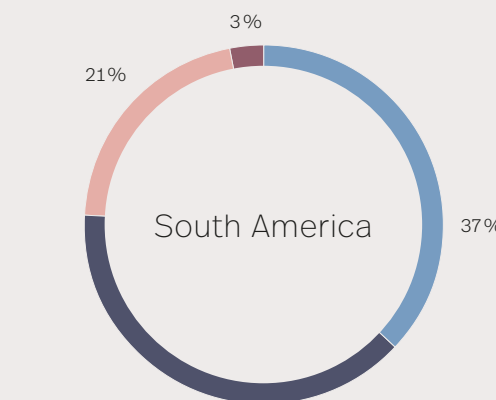
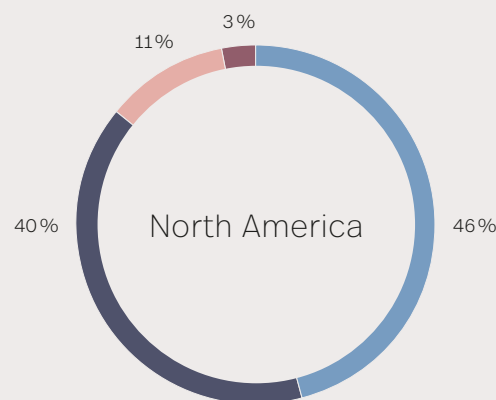
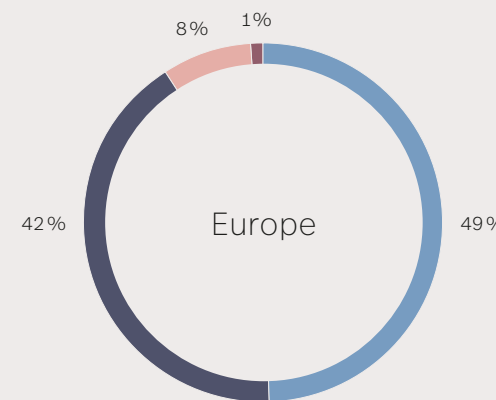
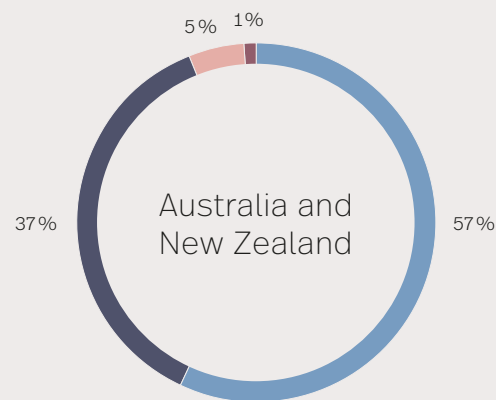
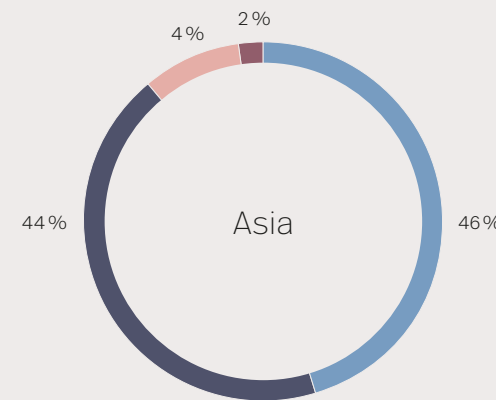
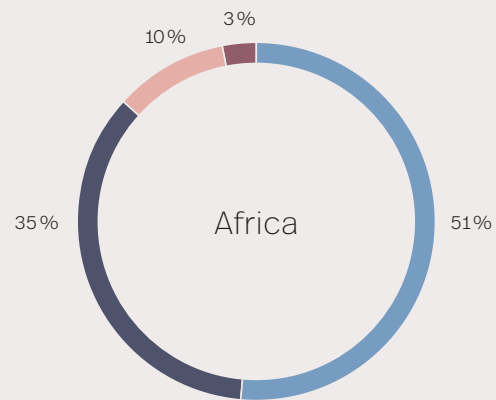
Source: World Value Survey, 2010-2014  
● very important ● rather important  
● not very important ● not important at all



How important, would you say, are friends in your life?

A tendency can also be seen in the question about the importance of friends: on average, 47% of those questioned indicated that friends are very important. A further 40% gave “rather important” as their answer. Friends are not very important for only 11% and the remaining 2% chose “not important at all”.

Source: World Value Survey, 2010–2014  
 ● very important ● rather important  
 ● not very important ● not important at all



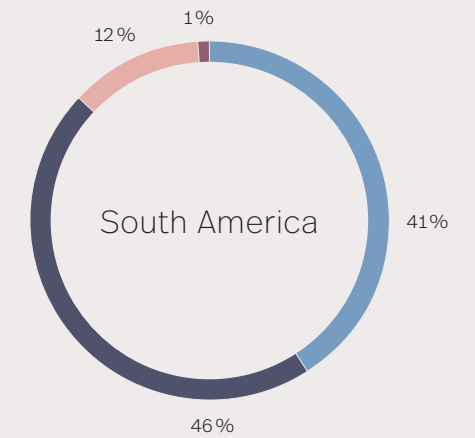
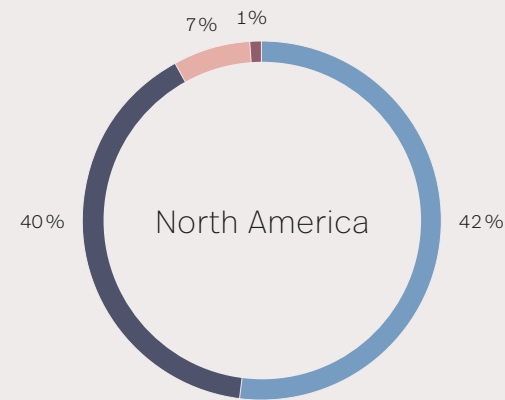
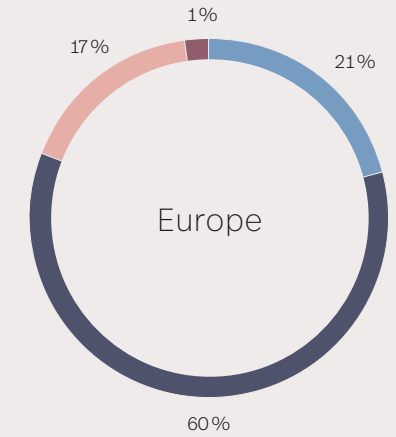
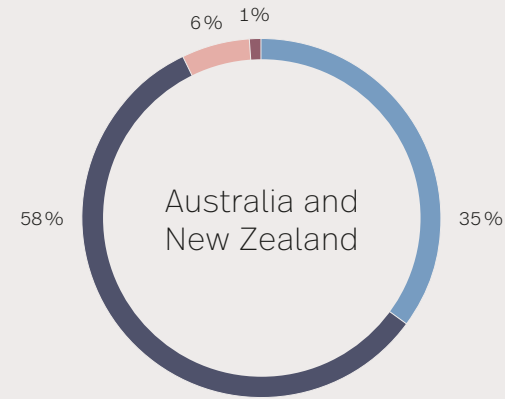
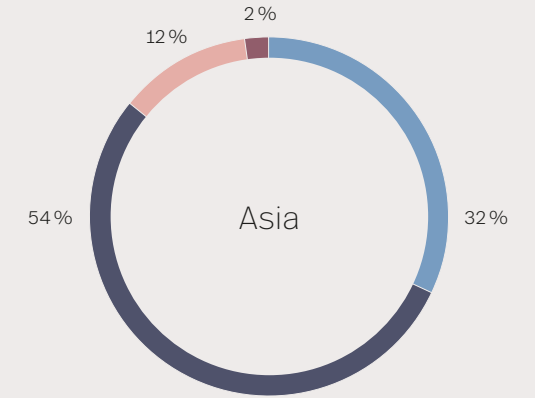
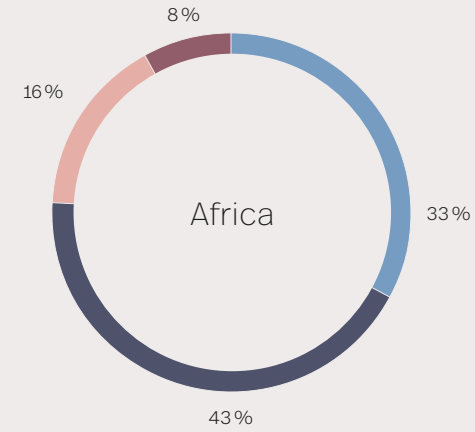


All things  
considered, would  
you say,  
you are happy?

On average, 32% of those questioned indicated that they were "very happy". A little over half (52%) gave the answer "rather happy". 13% of the those questioned were "not very happy" and merely 3% said "not happy at all."

Source: World Value Survey, 2010-2014

● very happy ● rather happy  
● not very happy ● not happy at all





In summary,  
 would you  
 say that the  
 differences  
 or similarities  
 prevail?

In many areas of life, people concern themselves quite strongly with the main intercultural differences. However, in addition to all the great differences we encounter in our dealings with other people, we can always find clear similarities with each other – all the more so once we forget the external factors such as ownership and social status.

We find that the ideas we have about our lives are very similar in many respects. There are also ideas, needs and goals that we share. This fact is, in my view, a really important insight.

As you have read in this book, some interesting information can be found in the World Value Surveys.

Also in the interview with Professor Schmitz, and the very personal statements of those questioned in the project, we find common ground, or at least common tendencies.

Looking at the statements of the approximately 400,000 respondents collected in the context of the World Value Survey, we find some exciting results. In addition to the question of the importance of particular aspects such as family or friends, we also find something about satisfaction or the weighting of passing on values.

The values that emerge from the question of the importance of family produce a surprisingly large intersection. Observed on a worldwide scale, 92% consider family to be very important. Even if we compare the values of the individual continents with each other, the values only fluctuate between 89 and 95%.

The same applies to the question about which values are conceived to be particularly important in the context of raising children. A total of 70% of the respondents consider a sense of responsibility to be important and 67% mentioned, among other things, conveying tolerance and respect. Imagination reached the lowest percentage in the survey, at only 22%.

Considering the values for the question of satisfaction, it is striking that 84% are either very happy or rather happy.

Also, when asked the question about the meaning and purpose of life, on average 42% responded with “often”. Comparing the answers of the individual continents, the values vary by a maximum of 15% (Europe with 36% compared to Africa with 51%).

I also find it interesting that even when questioning a small group from my surroundings, there are surprisingly a lot of similarities. Thus, individual statements can be summarised very quickly.

Of course, this fact cannot be considered a representative statistic. But it is interesting that people who were interviewed completely independently of each other – without even knowing each other in most cases – are very similar in their essential ways of life and values.

In conclusion, the following is particularly clear: we all want to feel at home, be together with people we love. We strive for personal happiness and we want to be free in what we do.

They are values which connect us all – independent of external factors. Regardless of where we live, what jobs we have or how much we own. In spite of a few differences, it is indeed possible to find common ground.

We should all realise that – as banal as it sounds – we share more than we are often aware of. Also in the knowledge that this is a much-simplified thesis, with this project I would like to get you to think about it.

Ask yourself and others these questions. Find out what makes you happy, what goals you pursue, which values you cherish. Start your search for answers now.

Discover the similarities, exchange ideas with each other, be there for each other and, above all, share your happiness with others.



