

Deep Culture Podcast – Transcript	
<p>The Deep Culture Podcast explores the psychological impact of intercultural experiences, informed by the sciences of brain, culture and mind. Join hosts Joseph Shaules, Yvonne van der Pol and Ishita Ray as we look at the personal growth that can come from travel, living and working abroad, learning a foreign language, growing up in a multicultural context—and the challenges of bridging different cultural worlds.</p>	
<p>(Episode 44 – Gender and Culture: Expectations)</p>	
<p>Is gender cultural? Oddly, gender is rarely mentioned in intercultural education, even though expectations about being a man or woman vary widely around the world. Join Joseph Shaules, Yvonne van der Pol and Ishita Ray as they explore cultural assumptions about gender. Emre Seven and Zeina Matar share their experiences navigating different gender worlds, and we also learn about research into gender attitudes.</p>	

Time	Speaker	
00:00:00	Zeina	(Hook) The man should bring money home, and you are expected to look pretty when he comes back from work. Food should be on the table, even for last-minute guests. The children should be fed, washed, and ready for bed.
00:00:23	Joseph	Hello, this is Joseph Shaules and welcome to the Deep Culture podcast, where we explore culture and the science of mind. And today I am here with my colleagues and co-hosts Ishita Ray and Yvonne Van der Pol. Hello.
00:00:38	Ishita	Hi, Joseph. Hi, Yvonne from Durgapur in eastern India. I am so happy to be here with both of you.
00:00:47	Yvonne	Well, hello from the Netherlands, and great being here with both of you, Joseph and Ishita. This is just wonderful.
00:00:54	Joseph	Yes. Well, we have been very excited about today's topic, so we decided to all join in the hosting.
00:01:01	Yvonne	So the title of this episode is <i>Gender and Culture: Expectations</i> .
00:01:07	Ishita	And I'm very happy to explore this topic of gender and culture, because when we talk about intercultural understanding or cultural difference, the topic of gender often doesn't come up.
00:01:22	Joseph	And I actually find it a bit odd because gender is a cultural issue. Expectations about what it means to be a man or what it means to be a woman. They are very different around the world.
00:01:35	Ishita	And cultural bridge people have to navigate these differences. I've spoken about how I felt uncomfortable in France the first time a man leaned in to kiss me on the cheek. And, Yvonne, you spent a year in Costa Rica, and I'm guessing that attitudes about gender were quite different from the Netherlands.
00:01:59	Yvonne	Oh, yes, very different. And not only was I a woman, I was a young, single Dutch woman, una señorita, so to say. I definitely had to learn to deal with machismo, which is a strong sense of manliness that I was not used to at all. And that comes with all kinds of assumptions about

		women. But you had to deal with gender difference, too, right Joseph? You have lived in Mexico and Japan.
00:02:28	Joseph	Yes. I remember once when I was living in Zacatecas, Mexico, and I started going out with a woman that I met there. And on one of our first dates, we were walking down the sidewalk together, and she turned and gave me this funny look and said, “A poco me andas vendiendo?” which literally means something like, “So what, are you selling me?” And I had no idea what she was talking about.
00:02:54	Ishita	Is it because you were walking on the wrong side of her?
00:03:00	Joseph	Exactly. I was on her left next to the building, but she expected me to be on the right between her and the street, to be her protector in some way I guess, it was what she expected of a gentleman. And I guess...well, I guess I failed the test.
00:03:18	Yvonne	You failed the test as a man in Mexico because there was this expectation, which you won't find in the Netherlands. I think many women might even be offended by this, that the man is the strong one who has to protect the woman. Women feel that they can protect themselves.
00:03:38	Joseph	So in this episode, we'll dig into cultural expectations about gender. We will focus on some basic questions, like, what do we mean by gender? In what ways is gender cultural?
00:03:51	Yvonne	And this is a hot topic. What seems natural to me may seem unfair or immoral to you. Should I change what I wear when I travel to a foreign country, if my clothes show my body, is that empowerment or a sign of immorality?
00:04:09	Ishita	And to navigate these differences, to decide where we stand on these issues, we first need to understand the different cultural logics behind gender expectations.
00:04:22	Joseph	And this brings us to part one: Is gender cultural?
Part One – Is gender cultural?		
	Joseph	So, before we get to the connection between gender and culture, let's make clear what we mean by gender, and in particular, the difference between gender and sex.
00:04:51	Ishita	In everyday speech, these words are used in very similar ways, but there is an important difference. Let's look at the way the World Health Organization describes them. Sex refers to, quote, “the different biological and physiological characteristics of females, males, and intersex persons, such as chromosomes, hormones, and reproductive organs.”
00:05:21	Yvonne	So when a baby is born and the doctor says it's a girl, she is saying that the child's sex is female. And in recent years, many of us are learning that it's not so simple as saying, you are either a boy or a girl. Yet fundamentally, in this episode, when talking about sex, we are referring to biological differences.

00:05:44	Ishita	The word gender, on the other hand, refers to “the characteristics of women, men, girls, and boys that are socially constructed.” In other words, what people expect from women and men, boys and girls, the roles they are expected to play.
00:06:07	Joseph	So, for example, what my girlfriend expected of me in Mexico, that was different from what I was used to in the United States.
00:06:15	Ishita	And let's just touch on the term gender identity, which refers to one's individual experience of gender. Do you feel like a man or a woman? Or is it more fluid, for example? And let's also mention sexual orientation, which refers to our feelings of sexual or romantic attraction. I could be a woman who is attracted to women, for example.
00:06:46	Yvonne	So let's go back to this idea of cultural differences in gender. We can clearly say that gender is cultural because societies have different cultural constructs of gender, different expectations about what it means to be a woman or man.
00:07:05	Joseph	And cultural bridge people find themselves navigating these differences. They have to make sense of them.
00:07:12	Ishita	And for me, at least a big part of that was discovering that other places have different assumptions about gender. Growing up in India, my everyday reality was the only reality I knew. For example, my father did help in everyday cooking, and yet my mother ate her meal after serving food to my father, my brother and me. And this was just normal. And then when I went to France, I saw that not only did men and women eat together, the men also took part in serving food, washing dishes, cleaning up. And I remember thinking, wow, it can be normal for men and women both to be responsible for those things.
00:08:06	Joseph	And so how did you make sense of this?
00:08:10	Ishita	Well, it struck me that in India, women and men are seen as fundamentally different, so it's normal for them to play different roles in society. A woman is fundamentally a nurturer, and the man a breadwinner, for example, or the man protects and the woman serves.
00:08:42	Yvonne	I think many Dutch people regard men and women as largely similar. In a family, for example, there is not much difference in how a girl or a boy is raised. Both are being prepared for an equal role in society. You see Dutch men on a bike with their kids, one in front and one in the back. Young fathers care for the children as much as the mothers do. Ideally, both work and share all the tasks in the household. Although research shows that these ideals aren't always lived up to.
00:09:16	Joseph	Well, I know that that's the image that I have of the Netherlands, that it's very gender neutral. There's an assumption that men and women are basically the same.
00:09:27	Yvonne	Right... And that's why in the Netherlands, I think many people see overly gendered displays, like lots of makeup for women or showing off your muscles for men, as over the top and not so positive because they emphasize the difference between men and women.

00:09:46	Ishita	Which is so different from India. And of course, not everyone accepts these ideas to the same degree. My parents, for example, treated me and my brother more equally than in many families I knew.
00:10:03	Yvonne	I grew up with my brother and there was no difference in the way we were educated or the choices we had. But my mother took me grocery shopping and not my brother. I helped her clean the house and my room, and she usually let my brother escape from these tasks. This was probably more typical for her generation and completely unconscious on her part.
00:10:29	Ishita	So of course, there is variation from person to person or family to family. But still these basic ideas are powerful. The important lesson, as cultural bridge people, is that these basic assumptions act as different starting points for cultural values.
00:10:51	Yvonne	In other words, if your starting assumption is that men and women are similar, then nurturing men and strong women will be valued.
00:11:03	Ishita	But if your starting assumption is that men and women are different, you will find it natural to honor difference. Strong men are valued, and nurturing women are valued. For example, for my mother, waiting until the family ate was a sign that she was a good woman, nurturing her family. That's how her mother and her mother's mother did things.
00:11:31	Yvonne	Well, to Dutch ears, this just sounds like mistreatment. The neighbors might even contact the police to report abuse. Living in Costa Rica, I was surprised to see a young daughter cutting her father's toenails. For them, it was absolutely normal. Yet I could never imagine me doing that for my father. Same for eating last - for Ishita's mother, it might be natural, but for me or my mother or even my father, it would seem totally unfair.
00:12:07	Joseph	And this is precisely why gender is cultural, and this can be difficult in foreign places. If you grow up in a society where modesty is important, do you take off your clothes if your Finnish friends invite you to a sauna? If you're a woman who feels gender equality is important, do you cover up because that's the local custom?
00:12:31	Yvonne	And these are the kinds of questions that cultural bridge people often have to grapple with.
00:12:38	Ishita	Which brings us to part two: What do you expect?
What do you expect?		
00:13:01	Yvonne	So we have been saying that we often take cultural assumptions about gender for granted.
00:13:08	Joseph	Well, when I was growing up, it was a given that boys don't cry. They carry their books under their arm, not cradled against their chest like girls do, and that boys should be good at physical sports, like football. Actually, I liked playing Foursquare, which was a game that girls played, and I liked reading books. And I did feel a bit embarrassed about that as a child. Well, Ishita, in episode 21, you told a story about not fitting in as

		a girl growing up in India, where there were some very clear gender expectations...
00:13:51	Ishita	I remember one evening in summer when I was playing kabaddi. It's a team sport played in India. It's very physical. You tag other players and score points. You tackle them. And I was the only girl playing in the group of all boys. I was having so much fun that I played well after dark, only to see my clearly displeased grandfather walking up to me and ordering me to stop playing immediately, to head back home with him. He made it clear that playing with boys until after dark was not expected of me. I was so angry, it seemed unfair. What's wrong with playing after dark? What's wrong with a girl playing with boys?
00:14:47	Yvonne	So Ishita, you were playing kabaddi, but you were the only girl. Is that unusual for girls to play?
00:14:55	Ishita	Well, traditionally it's a very male sport, but it wasn't uncommon for girls to play, but only with other girls. But my parents taught in an all-boys school and we lived on the campus, so I was surrounded by boys all the time. In many ways, I was more comfortable in sharing spaces with men than many women I know. And so it was difficult for me to accept that men and women needed to have separate places in society, so to speak. But in India, boys must be boys and girls must be girls, and that was never easy for me.
00:15:40	Joseph	And this is a reminder that growing up in a society doesn't automatically mean that gender expectations feel right to you. As podcast team member Zeina Matar tells us.
00:15:56	Zeina	Growing up in Lebanon as a young girl was relatively easy and free of worry. I cannot remember being scolded for not behaving as a young girl should, but difference in gender was already fixed. As a girl, you were expected to get married to someone from your sect and social group, and then motherhood. Of course, a university degree rounds the picture well, but you are expected to become a homemaker and a mother. The man should bring money home, and you are expected to look pretty when he comes back from work. Food should be on the table, even for last-minute guests. The children should be fed, washed, and ready for bed. In the community I grew up in, it was expected that you would have help at home. For many, this was the ideal, and they thrived on it. Expectations were about the smallest things, like clothing, wearing jeans or not, all the way to more important matters, such as the virginity of girls. They were expected to keep themselves, so to speak, for their future husband. To me, this was one of the most hypocritical things ever. You were judged and criticized all the time, and by extension, so were your parents and your family. I was a bit rebellious. Many of these expectations didn't make sense to me, and I clashed with my mother. She loved clothing and fashion, while I was quite the opposite. Eventually, I left Lebanon and was quite

		comfortable with gender expectations in Australia, the US, and Germany. And my kids who grew up in Germany certainly experienced a different gender world than I did. And that's just fine with me.
00:17:58	Joseph	And of course, it's not just women that face gender expectations. In societies where men and women are expected to be different, more gender separate societies, men face a lot of social pressure, too. As podcast team member Emre Seven tells us.
00:18:20	Emre	<p>Since my childhood, I've always fancied wearing long hair and earrings, maybe because of the rock stars and football players that I saw on TV. In high school I had quite tense arguments with my teachers. I was even denied entry at the school entrance. I was told I had to have a haircut to come in and the first thing I did after graduation was to grow out my hair. Türkiye is a mostly male dominant society and gender roles are traditionally quite rigid and this created conflict for me at home as my long hair was unacceptable, especially for my family in the village. Once some neighbors and relatives came for a visit. The women were sitting on the first floor and I was with the men on the second floor. One of my relatives commented in a sarcastic voice and loud enough to make sure my grandfather could hear, "Son, very nice hair you have." My grandfather answered even more ironically, "Ah yes, he's a bit different."</p> <p>I also remember something my great grandmother said. In fact, it was the last time I saw her. She was over a hundred at the time. She hugged me goodbye as I was departing and said something very untypical of her as she never commented on these things in her local dialect. She said, "<i>Oğlum, adamlarda saç iyi olmaz</i>", which means "My boy, they say it would not be good for a man to have long hair."</p> <p>It was even worse with my earrings. I got them when I was around 15 and my father, who is not a dominating type, was very angry. What the hell is this? I will not see that thing in your ear again. And that made me angry. I said, "If you do not look at it, you won't see it." And things got very tense. He said, "Men do not wear these things." To which I replied, "If my manhood would be ruined with a tiny piece of metal, then so be it." I slammed the door and left the house. Eventually my family accepted these things. The unhappiness with my long hair and earrings gradually turned into small complaints, then suggestions, and finally to acceptance. Sometimes my father says, "At least do not wear big earrings", but he fights no more.</p>
00:21:26	Joseph	These stories also remind us that cultural expectations about gender operate at a very deep level of the self. They are unconscious, self-evident. For Emre's family members, men simply don't wear earrings or have long hair. For Ishita's grandfather, girls simply don't play kabaddi.
00:21:49	Ishita	Cultural assumptions about gender often simply feel like facts, and that can make people blind to any other possibility. My mother says that there are no rules about women eating last. It is just how it is.

00:22:08	Yvonne	I think that if you question Dutch people about whether men and women really are similar, some people will be offended simply by that suggestion.
00:22:20	Joseph	So where does this leave us? We've said that cultural assumptions about gender run deep, and those assumptions may simply feel like facts.
00:22:31	Yvonne	All of this raises the question, what does research tell us about gender and culture? Can it help us make sense of these patterns?
00:22:41	Ishita	And that brings us to part three: By the Numbers
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00:22:54	Yvonne	In part three of this podcast, we usually try to connect things to research.
00:23:01	Joseph	That's a bit difficult in this episode because gender is so intertwined with culture, it can be hard to get your head around. Here, for example, is a quote about the connection between gender and culture from the Handbook of Culture and Psychology: "Culture has profound effects on gender related behavior - values, identity, roles, and how these are regarded in various social contexts. Culture governs the socialization of children, the tasks children are taught, the roles adult men and women adopt, and the expectations that govern women's and men's attitudes and behaviors. Culture provides the context in which gender roles, identity, and stereotypes unfold, as well as parameters regarding sexual behavior. Culture can maximize, minimize, or even eliminate gender difference in social behaviors and cognitions. Indeed, it is impossible to separate gender and culture."
00:24:18	Yvonne	Wow, that's a long list.
00:24:22	Joseph	I think the key idea here is that culture can maximize, minimize, or even eliminate gender differences in social behaviors and cognitions. And maybe that sounds obvious, but it is pretty radical. In effect, culture has a huge impact on how we experience gender.
00:24:52	Yvonne	We can learn about these differences through research. For example, the World Values Survey compares cultural attitudes around the world and has questions about attitudes related to gender.
00:25:06	Ishita	One result that caught my eye related to the idea that women have a duty to society to have children. In the Netherlands, less than 4% of people agreed with that statement. In the US, about 10% did, but in India, it was nearly 70%.
00:25:27	Yvonne	I think that in the Netherlands, women are not seen mainly as mothers. My husband Eric and I don't have children. But in Dutch society, I'm not seen as less of a woman and he's not seen as less manly.
00:25:41	Ishita	I think in India, being a mother is central to the identity of a woman, even among many educated women.
00:25:51	Joseph	Well, when I saw those results, I wanted to see differences in attitudes about family. But when asked if family is important, there was really

		little difference. 91% of Americans, 94% of Indians, 86% of Chinese, and almost 80% of respondents in the Netherlands agreed that family is important.
00:26:16	Yvonne	And this is fascinating. So people everywhere think family is important, but the image of family for an Indian may be very different from a Dutch person.
00:26:29	Ishita	Another item asks whether men make better political leaders than women. Around 50% of Chinese, Indian and Turkish respondents agreed, while the numbers were 13%, 9% and 18% for the Netherlands, Great Britain and the US.
00:26:53	Joseph	There were some findings which I found rather frightening. One item asked whether it is ever justifiable for a man to beat his wife.
00:27:02	Yvonne	And those numbers are frightening. In the US and Japan, about 13% felt it might be justifiable. In China and the Netherlands, almost 20%. One in five. In Turkey, 25%. That's one in four. In India, more than 30%, almost one in three. And in Lebanon, almost 50%. And that's half of the respondents. And if you look only at male respondents, the numbers are even higher.
00:27:38	Joseph	And I think it's clear that attitudes like this are related to gender inequality and violence against women.
00:27:55	Ishita	And you can also find data about expectations regarding sexual orientation in the World Value Survey. Nearly 70% in Turkey and China feel that homosexuality is never justifiable. The figures are close to 50% in India and Lebanon, whereas in the Netherlands it's only 4%.
00:28:21	Yvonne	What is clear from these numbers is that attitudes about gender and sexuality vary a lot depending on culture, and what some people will find normal, others will find shocking.
00:28:36	Ishita	Let's also explore research into culture and gender begun by Geert Hofstede. He did a landmark study of IBM employees around the world in the 1970s. He identified what he describes as relatively more masculine cultures versus more feminine cultures.
00:28:59	Joseph	And his research showed that men and women around the world tend to be oriented towards different workplace goals. Men more likely to value earning, recognition and advancement, whereas women were more likely to emphasize cooperation and job security. And based on this, he created the dimension of masculinity and femininity to rank countries.
00:29:24	Yvonne	Not everyone agrees with his terminology or his research methodology, but his key point is that societies can be oriented more towards the so-called masculine values or so-called feminine values.
00:29:41	Ishita	Hofstede calls a society masculine when emotional gender roles are clearly distinct - assertive, tough men focused on success and modest, tender women concerned with quality of life.

00:29:58	Yvonne	And a society is feminine when emotional gender roles overlap - both men and women are supposed to be modest, tender and concerned with the quality of life.
00:30:12	Joseph	So in a society that Hofstede calls masculine, men and women are fundamentally seen as different. And in societies he calls feminine, they are more likely to assume similarity.
00:30:26	Yvonne	Countries on the feminine side are, for example, Sweden, Norway and the Netherlands. Countries that score as more masculine are, for example, India, Turkey and Mexico.
00:30:40	Joseph	He also talks about differences in working style. In so-called feminine societies, there is more consensus in management and resolution of conflicts by compromise, leisure time preferred over money, in so-called masculine societies more decisive and aggressive management resolution of conflicts by letting the strongest win with more money preferred over more leisure.
00:31:08	Yvonne	Well, a lot of this makes sense to me. Recently, participants in my trainings from more so-called masculine countries were amazed by the Dutch focus on work life balance.
00:31:21	Joseph	I also find that sometimes the results don't make sense to me personally. For example, Switzerland is ranked as a more masculine country than India or Mexico. And of course, there is such a variety within a given country that sweeping generalizations can easily fail.
00:31:52	Ishita	And here is a result that I found very interesting - "Women's values differ less among countries than men's values do. And a country's femininity is more clearly reflected in the values of its men than in those of its women."
00:32:12	Yvonne	That implies that as a whole, men are more culturally different across cultures than women. That's fascinating. I wonder if that means it might be easier for women to connect to women across cultures and harder for men.
00:32:30	Joseph	Well, I know that I have learned important lessons from my foreign experiences with men. For example, I grew up in San Diego, in California, and I had a stereotypical image of Mexican men as super macho. It was a very negative image for me. But later I got to know Mexican men who lived up to high standards of traditional masculinity. I saw them, for example, working for low pay, far from home, sacrificing to support their family, taking pride in their dignity, not complaining. And so, I learned not to judge so quickly.
00:33:10	Yvonne	Well, and one lesson I take from this is that we need to approach this topic with humility. I, for example, have worked with immigrant families in the Netherlands and have seen all sorts of misunderstandings and stereotypes related to gender, mainly about first generation Muslim women. When people see that they have a serving role to their husbands and sons, people quickly assume that they are quote unquote,

		oppressed. But in their homes and with their families, these women often play a part powerful role.
00:33:46	Joseph	Yes, somehow it's easy to project our gender values onto others. But we do need to ask ourselves, do I really understand what it's like to grow up in a different gender world?
00:34:00	Yvonne	Well, there's so much more we don't have time to talk about here. For example, what do specialists say about the biological differences between men and women and how much that influences behavior? A very contentious issue.
00:34:18	Ishita	And we have barely talked about inequality and the kinds of attitudes and assumptions associated with that. For example, does believing that men and women are different automatically mean that women are seen as less worthy? I am also interested in research into moral intuitions related to purity, because it seems that in societies that emphasize purity, like India, it's often women that are judged more harshly.
00:34:53	Yvonne	I would also be interested in diving deeper into gender identity and sexual orientation. Well, plenty to cover in future episodes. For today at least, we can all agree that gender and culture is a big topic that deserves more attention. I think cultural bridge people have a special responsibility here. Navigating these differences teaches us how to bridge gender gaps as well.
00:35:22	Joseph	<p>And I think that's a good place to wrap up for today. Let's quickly mention some of the sources we've been drawing on. Ishita's story about playing kabaddi comes from episode 21 of this podcast, <i>Culture in the Cradle</i>, which talks about cultural differences in parenting. A great episode that you should check out.</p> <p>The quote about gender and culture comes from <i>Gender and Culture</i> by Deborah Best and Angelica Pusillo in the <i>Handbook of Culture and Psychology</i>, edited by Matsumoto and Hwang. To learn more about masculinity and femininity cultural dimensions, you can check out <i>Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind</i>. You will find more up to date data, however, by going online and looking for the country comparison tool on the Culture Factor group website. Also, if you're looking for data from the World Values Survey, they have an online analytic tool. All of the data is available for free to anyone.</p> <p>The Deep Culture podcast is sponsored by JII, the Japan Intercultural Institute. Both JII and this podcast are completely nonprofit.</p> <p>If you enjoy this podcast because it looks deeper into these topics, then you really need to check out JII's <i>Brain, Mind, and Culture Masterclass</i>. It is a blended learning course and online community. It is facilitated by me and Yvonne Van der Pol. All of the podcast team members have participated. Check it out. Do a web search for the Japan Intercultural Institute.</p>

		Thanks to Emre Seven and Zeina Matar for sharing their stories today. Thanks also to the other members of our podcast team, Liu Liu, Daniel Glinz, Ikumi Fritz, and our sound engineer Robinson Fritz, and of course everyone at JII. And thanks to you, Yvonne and Ishita, for sharing this time with me.
00:37:24	Yvonne	Well, it was a lot of fun doing this episode, especially also with three.
00:37:29	Ishita	Yes, it was indeed a lot of fun. And thank you, Joseph and Yvonne, for spending this time together.