

REFLECTING HEAVEN



BUILDING CHURCH WHERE YOU ARE

AN INTERCULTURAL

Intercultural Church Fundamentals HEART ATTITUDE



Tim McMahon

13th November 2025



BUILDING AN INTERCULTURAL CHURCH WHERE YOU ARE

The right HEART ATTITUDE is key for a church to become more intercultural

- 3 dangerous attitudes:
- 1. Cultural SUPREMACY
 - teach *identity in Christ*
 - *raise awareness* of the unavoidable impact of culture
- 2. Commitment to COMFORT
 - teach *remembering God's mercy* → *willing sacrifice*
- 3. FEAR of overwhelming DISCOMFORT
 - acknowledge these feelings!
 - teach *overruling of the mind*

An intercultural church's culture:

- “**Exalting Christ above all ...”**
- “Exalting Christ above all ... **competing cultural identities**”
- Our new identity “IN CHRIST” is given through the GOSPEL. **The gospel** must be allowed to **critique and transform culture** when culture COMPETES with Christ for our identity
- A church which grasps this truth will accept that **NO CULTURE is supreme** – even the culture of the majority community.
- An INTERCULTURAL CHURCH will have a **constantly transforming culture**. Transforming by the gospel. Always fighting cultural supremacy. Seeking to reflect the best from the cultures of all the members the Lord brings to it.
- The church's culture will therefore change as the members change – in number, in cultural composition, in knowledge of God's purposes, in commitment to willingly accommodate others from different cultures.

A few implications...

CHURCH, CULTURE, and IDENTITY

- **The CHURCH's purpose:** “Exalting Christ above all ...” – includes cultural identity
- A NUANCE: the biblical principles & practices that exalt Christ in our particular context are necessarily expressed within cultural forms. It cannot be otherwise! But because we are all image-bearers of the triune God, our experience (especially in communities) can be transcultural (especially *love*)
- Churches should expect both clashes and harmony between Christian values and wider culture
 - *Example of a clash: a church's unapologetic value of 'evangelism' vs. the (current) British value of 'tolerance'*
 - *Example of cultural harmony: commitment to impartiality in the justice system – the powerful not favoured*
- No national culture (even those with a “Christian” heritage) can validly claim to be “the” Christian or biblical culture. We can, however, influence the cultures we participate in – some more than others – to better reflect Christ’s ways.
- Our – or others’ – culture-of-origin should not be the basis of a Christian’s or a church’s identity. We are in danger of idolatry when we *demand* that our church preserve our cultural identity.
- *All cultures need constant transforming* by the gospel – including *all church cultures* in Britain and elsewhere. Growth in our understanding of the bible and changes in the people and cultures around us will mean that our church culture *cannot* remain the same. → CHANGE INEVITABLE



Create a CHANGE PLAN

Gradually build a change plan in 5 steps:

1. Facilitate a **conversion experience**
2. Provide a compelling **vision** for change
3. **Shrink** the change
4. Change the **setting**
5. Form a new **tribe**

Develop this plan with a team – don't impose it!

Using these resources – e.g. for Step 1 Facilitating a CONVERSION EXPERIENCE

1. Do a **LISTENING EXERCISE** – listening ONLY, no defence of the current situation – **to people of minority cultural groups** in your church / team. Use the **CHURCH ASSESSMENT** form

How do you feel about your culture's inclusion in each of the six areas in our church's life?

2. Ask each member of your **LEADERSHIP TEAM** to do the **PERSONAL ASSESSMENT** and **CHURCH ASSESSMENT**

3. DISCUSS 1 & 2 as a Leadership Team.

Note any differences in perception between the Leadership and people from minority groups.



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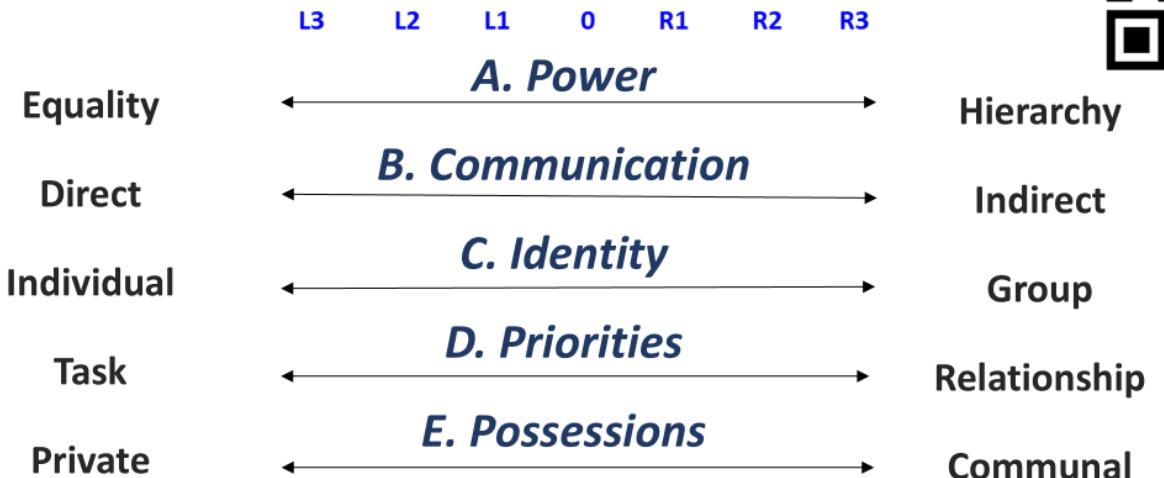
Raise awareness of the reality of cultural differences and the negative impact these have if not intentionally addressed
(e.g. *punctuality v. fluidity expectations about event times – English v. West Indians*)

- a. **Conduct interviews asking about the culture** of people in the communities you are seeking to engage more fully in your church.
- b. **ANALYSE the interviewees culture(s)** using the 15 culture scales.
Analyse the majority culture similarly!
- c. **Identify areas of CULTURE CLASH** caused by fundamental differences in approach between the minority culture(s) and the majority culture
- d. Identify the **values** underlying the minority culture's patterns – especially how their approach, though different to the majority culture, may **reflect biblical values**
- e. Discuss ways to **ACCOMMODATE the different cultural approach(es)** in a way that will get the best of both worlds. Identify where accommodation / change / discomfort will be required (by *both* groups).

Decide where you fall on the scale (Left3, Left2, Left1, Centre0, Right1, Right2, Right3) for each of the 5 preference scales. Enter your answer (L3, L2, L1, 0, R1, R2, R3) for each scale into the form at this link: <https://forms.gle/VGhHtxShTdDYFTxT8>



Culture Preference Scales A-E



PREFERENCE SCALES A-E

Mark ONE CHECKBOX on EACH SCALE showing where you fall on the spectrum (from L3 to R3)

tim.mcmahon64@gmail.com [Switch accounts](#)

Not shared

SPECTRUM: from Left (L) to Centre (0) to Right (R)
STRENGTH: 3=Strong 2=Moderate 1=A little 0=Neutral

	L3	L2	L1	0	R1	R2	R3
A. POWER (Equality to Hierarchy)	<input type="checkbox"/>						
B. COMMUNICATION: (Direct to Indirect)	<input type="checkbox"/>						
C. IDENTITY (Individual to Group)	<input type="checkbox"/>						
D. PRIORITIES (Task to Relationship)	<input type="checkbox"/>						
E. POSSESSIONS (Private to Communal)	<input type="checkbox"/>						

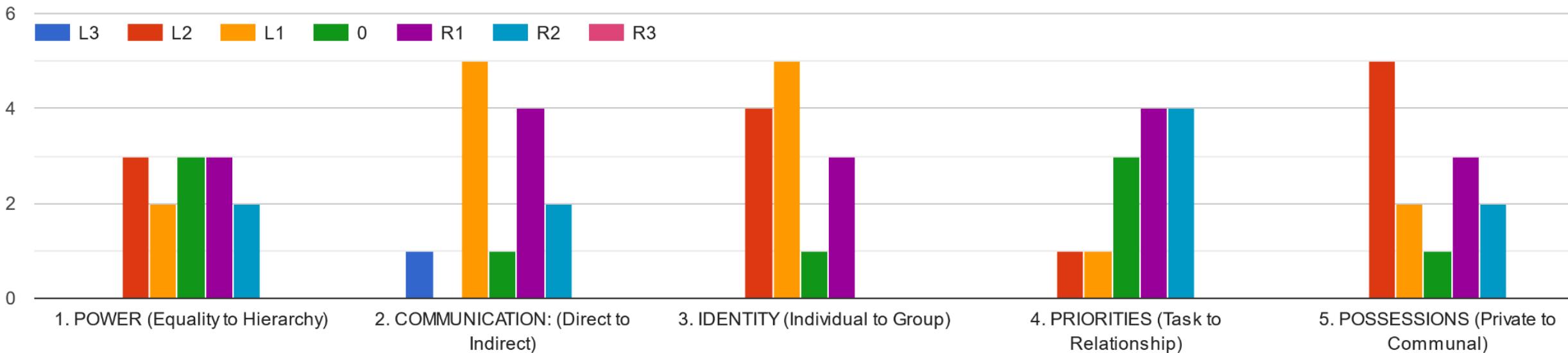
SURVEY RESULTS: Culture Preferences A-E

Power Communication Identity Priorities Possessions

Equality ← → Hierarchy Direct ← → Indirect Individual ← → Group Task ← → Relationship Private ← → Collective

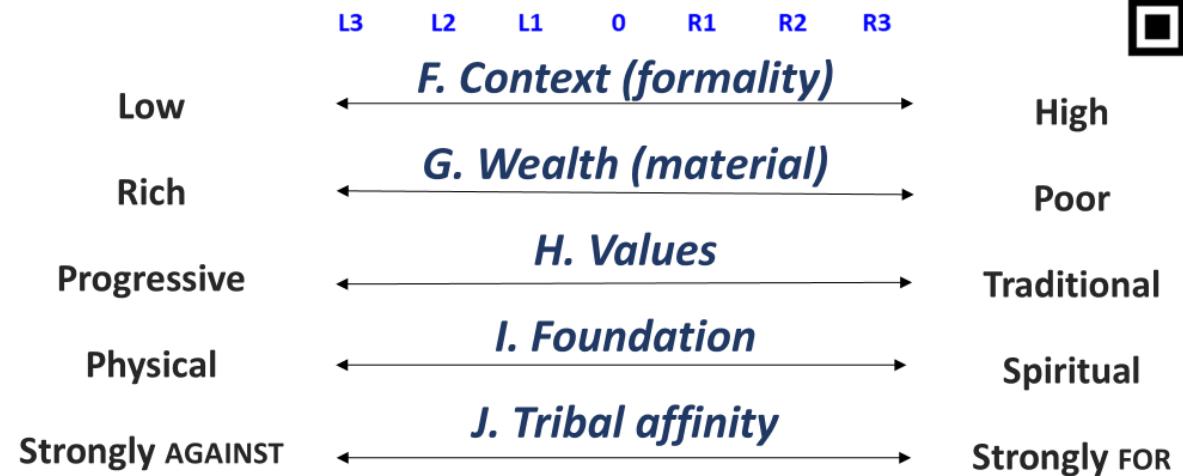
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Culture Preference Scales F-J



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	L3	L2	L1	0	R1	R2	R3
F. CONTEXT (High to Low)	<input type="checkbox"/>						
G. WEALTH (Rich to Poor)	<input type="checkbox"/>						
H. VALUES (Progress to Tradition)	<input type="checkbox"/>						
I. FOUNDATION (Physical to Spiritual)	<input type="checkbox"/>						
J. TRIBAL (Against to For)	<input type="checkbox"/>						

SURVEY RESULTS: Culture Preferences F-J

Context

Low $\leftarrow \rightarrow$ High

Wealth

Rich $\leftarrow \rightarrow$ Poor

Values

Progressive $\leftarrow \rightarrow$ Traditional

Foundation

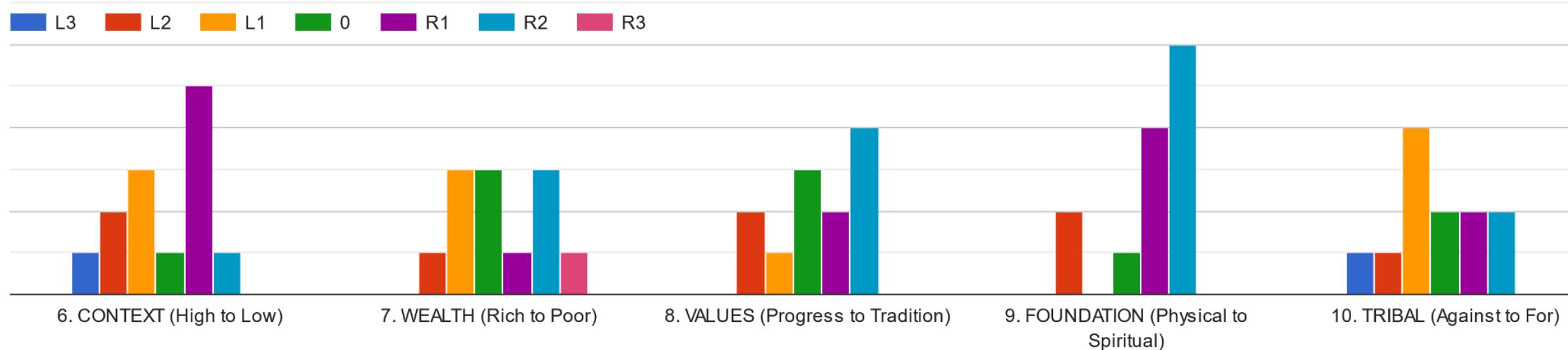
Physical $\leftarrow \rightarrow$ Spiritual

Tribalness

Against $\leftarrow \rightarrow$ For

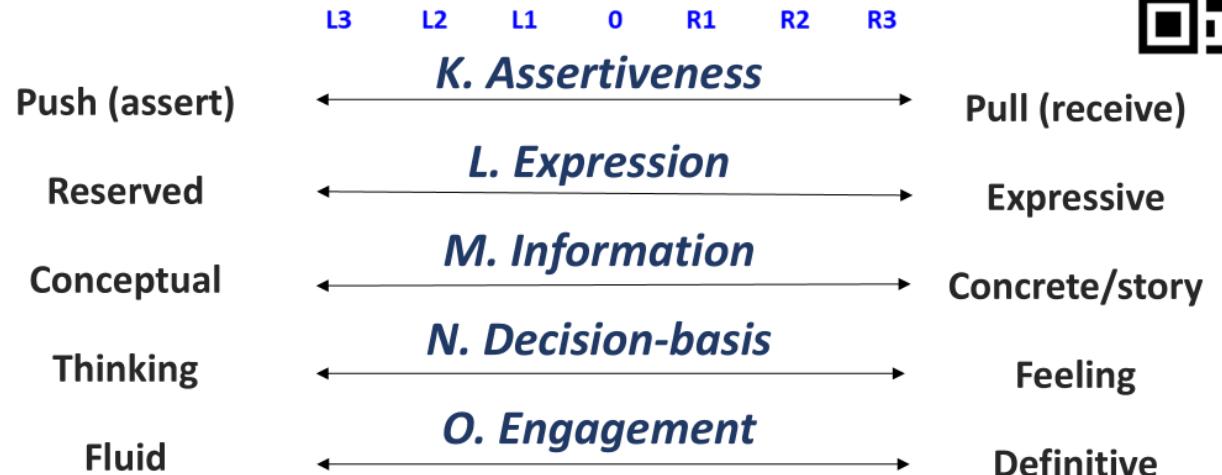
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Culture Preference Scales K-O



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K. ASSERTIVENESS (Push to Pull)	<input type="checkbox"/>						
L. EXPRESSION (Reserved to Expressive)	<input type="checkbox"/>						
M. INFORMATION (Concept to Concrete)	<input type="checkbox"/>						
N. DECISION (Thinking to Feeling)	<input type="checkbox"/>						
O. ENGAGEMENT (Fluid to Definite)	<input type="checkbox"/>						

SURVEY RESULTS: Culture Preferences K-O

Assertiveness Expression Information Decision-basis Engagement

Assertive \leftrightarrow *Receiving*

Reserved \leftrightarrow *Expressive*

Information

Conceptual \leftrightarrow *Concrete*

Decision-basis

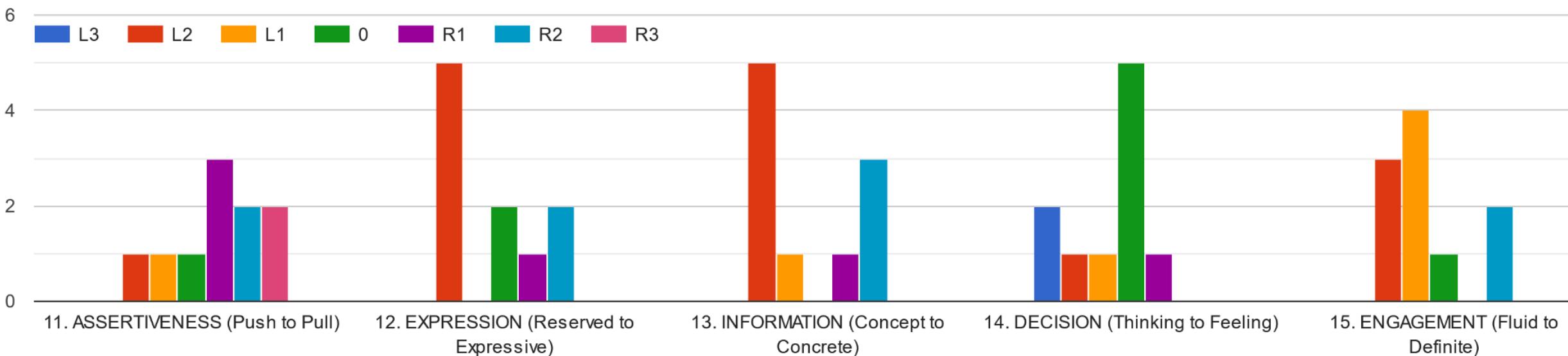
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The diagram illustrates five personality dimensions arranged along a horizontal axis from left to right:

- A. Power** (Leftmost)
- B. Communication**
- C. Identity**
- D. Priorities**
- E. Possessions** (Rightmost)

Below the axis, five corresponding adjectives are listed, each aligned with a dimension:

- Equality (aligned with A. Power)
- Direct (aligned with B. Communication)
- Individual (aligned with C. Identity)
- Task (aligned with D. Priorities)
- Private (aligned with E. Possessions)

Hierarchy
Indirect
Group
Relationship
Communal

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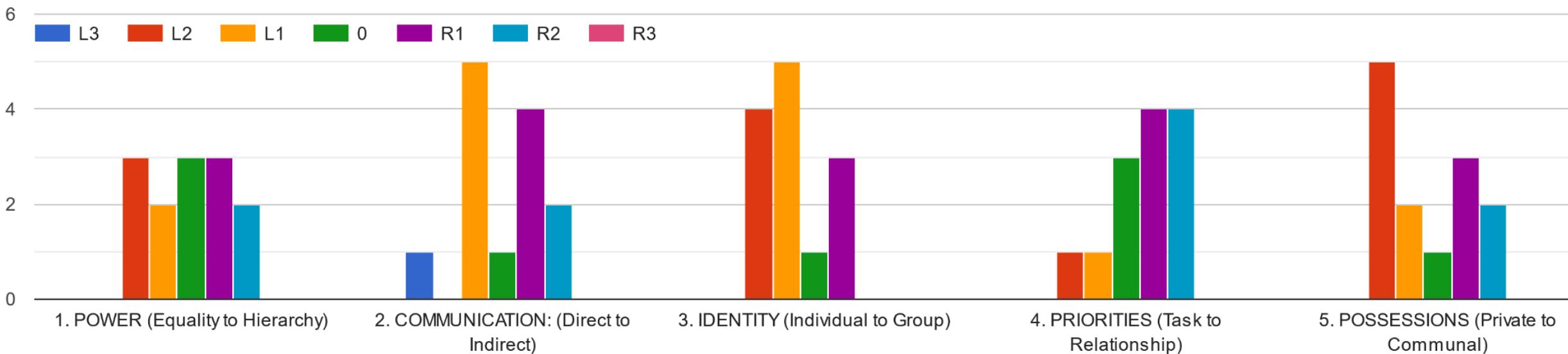
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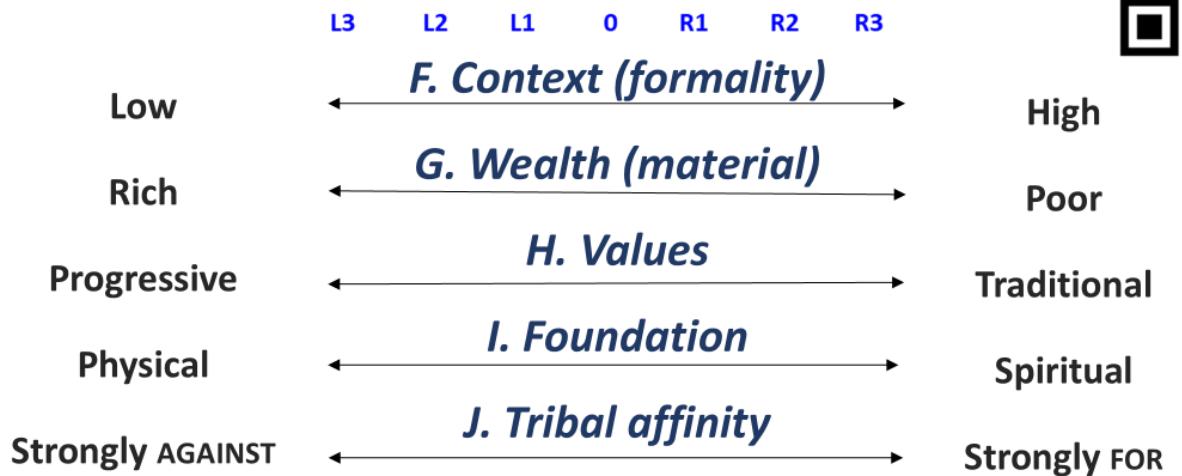
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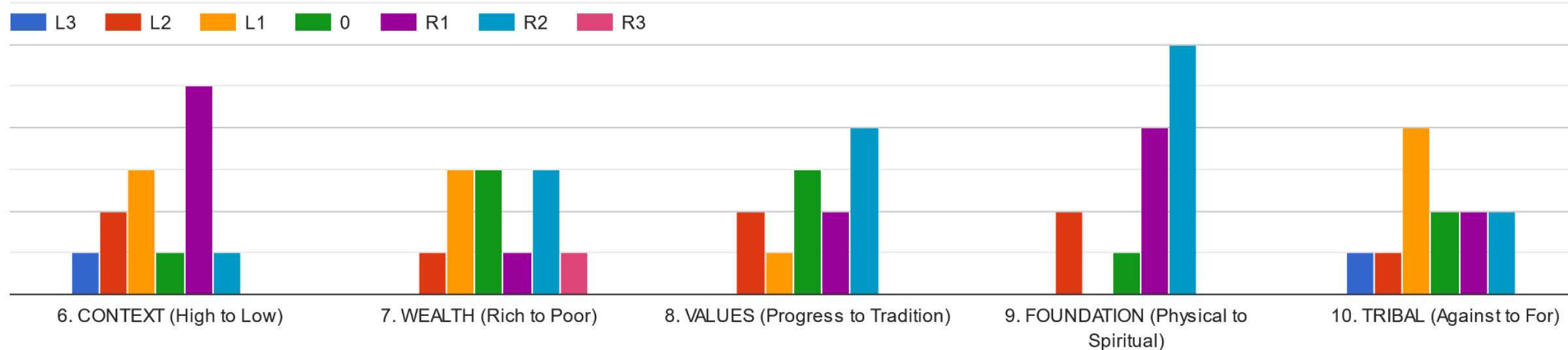
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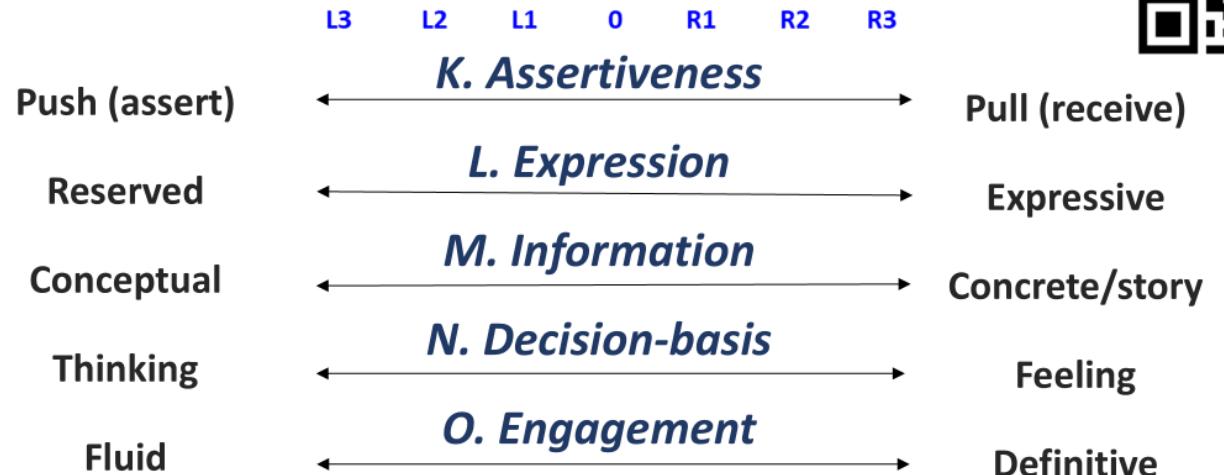
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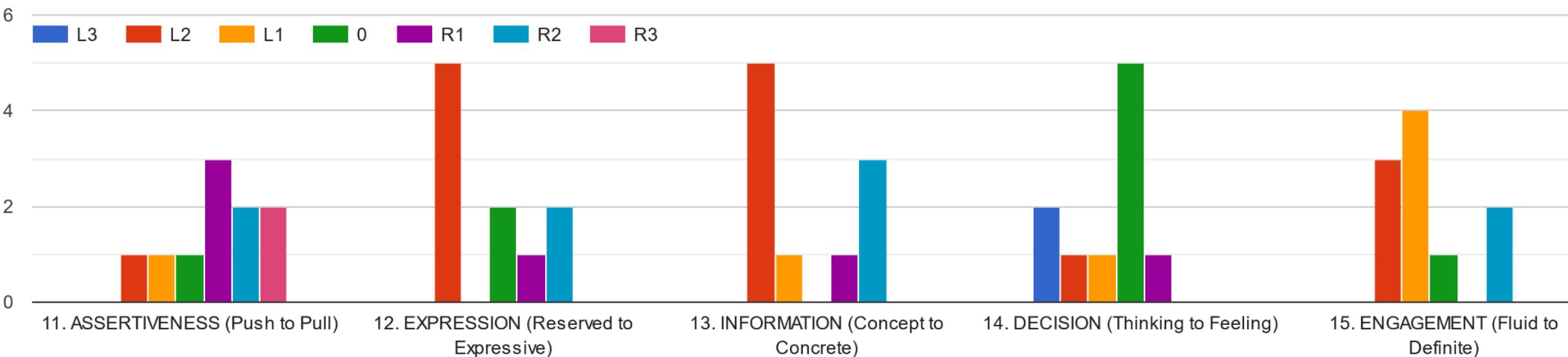
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CHANGE PLAN – Steps 2-3

- A. FORM A STEERING GROUP – ensure diverse input!**
 - a. Identify WHO** – in or outside! – your church should help define what intercultural community might look like in your ministry context.
 - b. Make a plan** to engage and empower those people to input to, and significantly influence, the formation of an intercultural vision for your context.
 - c. Form the group** (this will take more than a single meeting!)
- B. Create a “Destination postcard” for what your church might look like if it were more intercultural (Step 2: provide a compelling **vision**).**
- C. Identify the first critical steps** of the change process and start implementing them (Step 3: **Shrink** the change)

CHANGE PLAN – Step 4

Step 4: **change the setting**

BRAINSTORM

How can you change the **environment** so it becomes easier for people in your church to make the changes you think God wants to see?

CHANGE PLAN – Step 5

Step 5: **form a new tribe**

What can **you do** to create a community where the desired behaviour is the new norm?

How can we encourage **others** in attitudes and actions that will contribute to establishing a new norm?



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CHANGE PLAN – Review

conduct a *pre-mortem* to

VACCINATE YOUR PLAN!

Imagine it's November 2026, and your change plan has failed!



1. Take 3 minutes individually to write down every conceivable reason **why it might fail**.
2. Now work as a group. **Collect all reasons** on a flipchart.
3. **Underline the 3 most likely/critical ones**
4. Consider, what are a **few things** you could do **collectively** to avoid the pitfalls that might lead to failure?

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