

CHAPTER 5

Shaping Interpretations of Reality: Cultural Values

Your beliefs become your thoughts. Your thoughts become your words. Your words become your actions. Your actions become your habits. Your habits become your values. Your values become your destiny.

MAHATMA GANDHI

On a group of theories one can found a school; but on a group of values one can found a culture, a civilization, a new way of living together among men.

IGNAZIO SILONE

Previous chapters have provided you with an understanding of the basic components of communication and culture, explained some of the different ways you acquire your culture, and examined many of the factors that contribute to how members of a culture see the world. By now, you should have an appreciation of how extensively your daily life is guided by culture. Factors such as family, history, religion, and cultural identity influence your decisions as to what you think about and how you should act. An influential factor may affect something as mundane as what you consider an appropriate snack: a bag of chips, a dish of hummus, or a ball of rice wrapped in seaweed. It also may influence something as complex as how you view issues such as school prayer, capital punishment, and abortion rights in the United States or human rights in China. What you think and how you react to events is based in part on your perceptions of the world, as well as the beliefs and values that have been instilled in you by your culture. However, external factors beyond the pale of culture such as the death of a love one, etc., can affect your beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions as well.

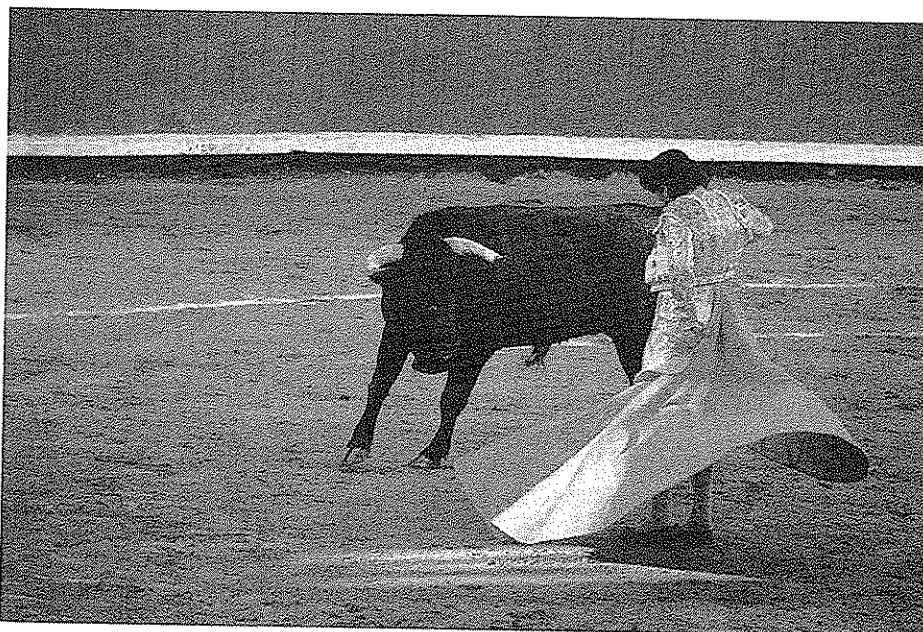
PERCEPTION

To steer your attention toward the topic of perception, we will begin with a few questions. The moon is a rocky, arid physical sphere that orbits the earth; yet, when looking at this object, many Americans often visualize a human face; many American Indians,

as well as Japanese, perceive a rabbit; Chinese claim to see a lady fleeing her husband; and Samoans report a woman weaving. Why? In Japan and China, people fear the number four; in the United States, it is the number thirteen. For Americans, a "V" sign made with two fingers usually represents victory or peace. Japanese high school students see it as a sign of happiness or good luck. But when given with the palm facing inward, Australians and the British equate the gesture with a rude American sign usually made with the middle finger. Why? Most Asians respond negatively to white flowers because white is associated with death. For Peruvians, Iranians, and Mexicans, yellow flowers often invoke the same reaction. Why? In all these examples, the external objects (moon, hands, flowers) were the same, yet the responses were different. The reason is perception—how diverse cultures have taught their members to look at the world in different ways. To this end we will (1) define perception, (2) link perception to culture, (3) briefly discuss beliefs and values, and (4) look at how cultural differences in perception influence intercultural communication.

What is Perception?

Perception is the means by which you make sense of your physical and social world. As the German novelist Hermann Hesse wrote, "There is no reality except the one contained within us"—and we will add that that reality has been placed in you, in part, by your culture. The world inside of you "includes symbols, things, people, ideas, events, ideologies, and even faith."² Your perceptions give meaning to external forces by allowing you to interpret, categorize, and organize those stimuli that you choose to monitor. As Gamble and Gamble state, "Perception is the process of selecting, organizing, and interpreting sensory data in a way that enables us to make sense of our world."³ In other words, perception is the process whereby people convert external events and experiences into meaningful internal understanding. According to Singer, "We experience everything



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Your perceptions of and responses to external events are in part determined by your culture.

CONSIDER THIS



*It has been said that "Perception is reality."
How would you explain this statement? Do you
agree or disagree with the statement? Why?*

in the world not as it is—but only as the world comes to us through our sensory receptors," and this includes how you cognitively process the stimuli.⁴ Although the physical dimension is an important phase of perception, you must realize that the psychological aspects of perception are what help you understand intercultural communication.

Perception and Culture

Whether you feel delighted or ill at the thought of eating the flesh of a cow, pig, fish, dog, or snake depends on what your culture has taught you about food. Whether you are repulsed by the sight of a bull being jabbed with short, barbed steel spears and long sharp swords, consider it a traditional sport, or see it as dramatic art depends on your enculturation. As we pointed out in Chapter 1, by exposing a large collection of people to similar experiences, culture generates similar meanings and similar behaviors. This does not mean, of course, that everyone in a particular culture will see something in exactly the same way, as we discuss in a later section of this chapter.

An example of how culture affects perception and communication is found in a classic study by Bagby. Mexican children from a rural area and children from the dominant culture in the United States viewed, for a split second, a stereogram in which one eye was exposed to a baseball game while the other was exposed to a bullfight. Overall, the children reported seeing the scene that corresponded to their culture; Mexican children tended to report seeing the bullfight, and American children tended to report the baseball game.⁵ What happened was that the children made selections based on their cultural background; they were inclined to see and to report what was most familiar.

In yet another experiment demonstrating how culture influences perception, children's speech and behavior that reflected assertiveness, excitement, and interest were valued positively by Caucasian mothers. Navajo mothers who observed the same type of behavior in their children reported them as being mischievous and undisciplined. To the Navajo mothers, assertive speech and behavior reflected discourtesy, restlessness, self-centeredness, and lack of discipline; to the Caucasian mothers, the same behaviors reflected self-discipline and were, therefore, beneficial for the child.⁶

Personal credibility is another perceptual trait shaped by culture that is subject to cultural variability, as illustrated by De Mente:

As is well known, Americans and most Europeans prize frankness, detailed presentations, and lively debate based on facts as well as assumptions. In contrast, for more than a thousand years the Japanese were programmed to speak publicly only in *tatemaie* [emphasizing social expectations] terms, and reveal their *honne* (real thoughts) only in private settings.⁷

To cite another example, in Mexico, social status is a major indicator of credibility, but in the United States, it carries only modest importance. Even the perception of something as simple as the blink of an eye is affected by culture. As Adler and Rodman note, "The same principle causes people from different cultures to interpret the same event in different ways. Blinking while another person talks may be hardly noticeable to North

Americans, but the same behavior is considered impolite in Taiwan."⁸

As we noted in Chapter 2, the manner in which the elderly are perceived is also a product of culture. In the United States, culture "teaches" the value of youth and rejects growing old. According to one communication researcher, "young people view elderly people as less desirable inter-

action partners than other young people or middle-aged people."⁹ This negative view of the elderly is not found in all cultures. For example, in Arab, Asian, Latin American, and American Indian cultures, older people are perceived in a very positive light. Notice what Harris and Moran tell you about the elderly in Africa:

It is believed that the older one gets, the wiser one becomes—life has seasoned the individual with varied experiences. Hence, in Africa age is an asset. The older the person, the more respect the person receives from the community, and especially from the young.¹⁰

It is clear from these few examples that culture influences one's subjective reality and that there are direct links among culture, perception, and behavior. This concept is echoed by Chiu and Hong, who write, "[E]ven very basic cognitive processes, such as attention and perception, are malleable and can be altered through cultural experiences."¹¹

We are now ready to summarize two ways that culture influences the perception process. First, perception is selective. This means that because there are too many stimuli competing for the attention of your senses at the same time, you "allow only selected information through [y]our perceptual screen to [y]our conscious mind."¹² What is allowed in is, in part, determined by culture. Second, your perceptual patterns are learned. As we have pointed out a number of times, everyone is born into a world without meaning. Culture teaches you the meaning of most of your experiences. In other words, "perception is culturally determined. We learn to see the world in a certain way based on our cultural background."¹³ As is the case with all of culture, perceptions are stored within each human being in the form of beliefs and values. These two concepts, working in combination, form what are called *cultural patterns*, which are discussed later in this chapter.

BELIEFS

What are your beliefs, how did you acquire them, and what function do they perform? Rogers and Steinfatt contend that "Beliefs serve as the storage system for the content of our past experiences, including thoughts, memories, and interpretations of events. Beliefs are shaped by the individual's culture."¹⁴ Beliefs are important because they are "accepted as truths."¹⁵ Beliefs are usually reflected in your actions and communication behavior. If, for instance, you believe that a good tan is a reflection of a healthy, active lifestyle and makes a person more attractive, you will probably find time to lie out in the sun or even go to a tanning salon. On the other hand, if you believe that suntanned skin reflects a low social status, you will probably make an extra effort to avoid exposing yourself to the sun by wearing a hat, long-sleeved shirt, and perhaps gloves, and

REMEMBER THIS



Perception is selective. Perceptual patterns are learned.

carrying an umbrella, on sunny days. You might embrace the *New York Times*, CNN, FOX News, or even *The Daily Show* as an arbiter of the truth because you respect it. If you value the Islamic tradition, you will believe that the Koran is an infallible source of knowledge and thus accept the miracles and promises that it offers. What you trust as a source of truth and knowledge—the *Times*, the Bible, the Koran, the Torah, the entrails of a goat, tea leaves, the Dalai Lama, visions induced by peyote, the changes specified in the Taoist *I Ching*, or a celebrity blog—depends on your cultural background and experiences. If someone believes that his or her fate is preordained, you cannot throw up your hands and declare that belief wrong just because it disagrees with your conviction that each person is the master of his or her own fate. You must be able to recognize that cultures have different realities and belief systems. People who grow up in cultures where Christianity is the predominant religion usually believe that salvation is attainable only through Christ. People who are Jewish, Islamic, Buddhist, Shinto, or Hindu do not subscribe to that conviction. They hold their own beliefs about salvation, what happens to the human spirit when the body dies, and what are the appropriate rituals to perform when a person dies.¹⁶ What is powerful about beliefs is that they are so much a part of culture that in most instances you do not question them or even demand proof. You simply accept them because you “know they are true,” and thus, they endure.

EXPLORING VALUES

One of the most important functions of beliefs is that they form the basis of your values, which provide “rules for making choices and for resolving conflicts.”¹⁷ As Nanda and Warms point out, “Values are shared ideas about what is true, right, and beautiful which underline cultural patterns and guide society in response to the physical and social environment.”¹⁸ Because this is a book about culture, it is essential that you note that Nanda and Warms use *shared* in their description, because values are not only held by individuals; they are also the domain of the collective.¹⁹ The significance of values is that they constitute a system that “represents what is expected or hoped for, required or forbidden. It is not a report of actual conduct but is the system of criteria by which conduct is judged and sanctions applied.”²⁰ To illustrate, Hofstede offers a short list of some topics that deal with values:²¹

- Evil versus good
- Dangerous versus safe
- Ugly versus beautiful
- Abnormal versus normal
- Irrational versus rational
- Dirty versus clean
- Decent versus indecent
- Unnatural versus natural
- Paradoxical versus logical
- Moral versus immoral

Your cognitive structure consists of many values. These values are highly organized and, as Rokeach says, “exist along a continuum of relative importance.”²² Values can be classified as primary, secondary, and tertiary. Primary values are the most important: they specify those things worth dying for. In the United States, democracy and the protection of oneself and close family members are primary values. Secondary values are also quite important. Alleviation of the pain and suffering of others and securing material possessions are secondary values to most people in the United States. You care about such values, but do not hold the same intense feeling toward them as you do toward primary values. Tertiary values are at the bottom of our value hierarchy. Examples of tertiary values in the United States are hospitality to guests and cleanliness. Although you

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strive to carry out these values, they are not as profound or consequential as values from the first two categories.

As we pointed out in Chapter 2, values, like all important aspects of culture, are transmitted by a variety of sources (family, proverbs, media, school, church, state, etc.) and therefore tend to be broad based, enduring, and relatively stable. Also, Hofstede reminds us that "values are programmed early in our lives" and therefore are often non-rational, especially when viewed by someone from another culture.²³

As you saw from Hofstede's list, values are generally normative and evaluative. In other words, values tell a member of a culture what is normal by identifying what things are good and bad, or right and wrong. Cultural values define what is worthwhile to die for, what is worth protecting, what frightens people, what subjects are worthy of study, and which topics deserve ridicule. As already indicated, values are learned within a cultural context. For example, the outlook of a culture toward the expression of affection is one of the many values that differ among cultures. In the United States, people are encouraged to express their feelings openly and outwardly and are taught not to be timid about letting people know they are upset. Think for a moment about what message is carried by the proverb "The squeaky wheel gets the grease." This positive American attitude toward the public expression of emotion is very different from the one found in China. As Gao and Ting-Toomey note, "Chinese are socialized not to openly express their own personal emotions, especially strong negative ones."²⁴ Bond points out that among the Chinese, "Uninhibited emotional display is a disruptive and dangerous luxury that can ill be afforded."²⁵ What is important about values is that they are translated into action. For instance, an awareness of the value the Japanese place on customer service in business transactions might prompt you to be more meticulous when dealing with a client from Japan.

Attentiveness to cultural values can also offer partial insight into a culture's approach to larger social issues. Huntington found data from the 1960s that showed the economies of South Korea and Ghana to be quite similar. By the 1990s, South Korea's economy had grown to become the fourteenth largest in the world, but Ghana's had remained static. According to Huntington, the reasons for this change were clear: "South Koreans valued thrift, investment, hard work, education, organization and discipline. Ghanaians had different values. In short, culture counts."²⁶

CONSIDER THIS



Belief → Value → Attitude → Behavior

If you believe that material possessions are a better gauge of success and status than the number of advanced degrees obtained, you will value education only because it helps you get a good paying job. You will probably have a positive attitude toward classes that are job related and a less than positive attitude toward required, non-career-oriented classes. This attitude can influence your behavior by motivating you to work hard in the job-related classes, at the "cost" of the other classes, and to leave school after acquiring an undergraduate degree. Conversely, if you come from a culture that believes status is automatically conferred by a graduate degree, your approach to classes might be very different.



REMEMBER THIS

Cultural patterns can be thought of as systems of integrated beliefs and values that work in combination to provide a coherent, if not always consistent, model for perceiving the world. These patterns contribute not only to the way you perceive and think about the world, but also to how you live in the world.

USING CULTURAL PATTERNS

People and cultures are extremely complex and consist of numerous inter-related cultural orientations. A useful umbrella term that allows us to talk about values, beliefs, and other orientations collectively is *cultural patterns*. As you might suspect, these cultural patterns are useful in the study of intercultural communication because they are systematic and repetitive instead of random and irregular.²⁷

Obstacles in Using Cultural Patterns

Before opening our discussion of cultural patterns, we need to offer a few cautionary remarks that will enable you to better use the cultural patterns presented in the remainder of this chapter.

WE ARE MORE THAN OUR CULTURE

We begin by repeating an important point made in Chapter 1: the dominant values of a culture may not be shared by all individuals within a culture. Factors as diverse as age, gender, and co-cultural affiliations, along with “socioeconomic status, educational level, occupation, personal experience,”²⁸ also shape your view of your surroundings, beginning very early in life. As pointed out by Lynch and Hanson, “Lessons learned at such early ages become an integral part of thinking and behavior.”²⁹

Because people are more than just their culture, delineating a national culture or typical patterns for any culture is extremely hazardous because of the heterogeneity of almost all societies. For example, it is estimated that together the United States and Russia contain over 125 ethnic groups. The *Encyclopedia of American Religions* identifies nearly 1,200 different religions in the United States. And, of course, the United States is home to numerous co-cultures that do not share many of the values associated with the dominant Euro-American culture. Lynch makes this point clear in the following paragraph:

In the United States, competition is highly prized; however, the reverse is true in many Native American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, Pacific Island, and Southeast Asian cultures. Competition is viewed as self-serving; and the emphasis is on cooperation and teamwork. Because competition is a negative trait in these cultures, being viewed as competitive rather than cooperative would bring shame rather than pride.³⁰

Many other nations also have large and varied ethnic populations. The *CIA World Factbook* tells us that Romania has populations of Hungarians, Roma, Ukrainians,

Germans, Russians, and Turks. Peru has Amerindians, mestizos (mixed Amerindian and white), whites, blacks, Japanese, Chinese, and others. While the Han Chinese make up the majority of China's population, there are also Zhuang, Uygur, Hui, Yi, Tibetan, Miao, Manchu, Mongol, Buyi, and Korean ethnic groups. Even Japan, noted for its relative homogeneity, has significant populations of Koreans, Chinese, Brazilians, and Filipinos. In Afghanistan, Goodson notes, "Islam is divided by hundreds of variations," regional politics, and "tribal social groupings" based on communal loyalties that make it difficult to speak of a single nation or culture.³¹ The division among Sunni, Shiites, and Kurds in Iraq, which is further complicated by tribalism, is now well known. Hence, cultural patterns used to characterize an entire country should generally be limited to the members of the dominant culture in that nation.

CULTURAL PATTERNS ARE INTEGRATED

Due to the linear nature of language, we are forced to talk about only one cultural pattern at a time. It is important, however, to realize that the patterns do not operate in isolation; they are interrelated and integrated. In other words, they act in concert. If a culture values the elderly, that value gets attached to yet other values related to respect and decision making.

CULTURAL PATTERNS ARE DYNAMIC

Your scan of world events—or a review of what we wrote in Chapter 1—will tell you that cultures change and therefore so do their values. The women's movement, for example, has greatly altered social organizations and some value systems in the United States. With more women than men now earning college degrees, we can see how the workplace and classrooms have changed in the United States during the last twenty years.³² As globalization brings Western capitalism and culture to nations throughout the world, it is common to see young people in some traditional countries now wearing jeans and dancing to American pop music. However, even granting the dynamic nature of culture and value systems, we again remind you that regardless of the culture, the deep structures always resist change.

CULTURAL PATTERNS CAN BE CONTRADICTORY

In many instances, we find contradictory values in a particular culture. In the United States, we speak of "all people being created equal," yet we observe pervasive racial prejudice toward minorities and violence directed against gays. Indeed, some of the most divisive political issues now facing the United States—abortion, gay marriage, and separation of religion and state—are related to contrasting values. These sorts of contradictions are found in all cultures. The Bible advocates helping others and the Quran teaches brotherhood among all people. Yet, in both the United States and in many Arab cultures, some segments of the population are very rich and others are extremely poor. Even with the reservations we have just offered, it is our contention that the study of cultural patterns is a worthwhile endeavor that can provide considerable insight into the values, behaviors, and communication styles of other cultures.

Choosing Cultural Patterns

Deciding what cultural patterns to write about was not an easy task. We have already mentioned the idea that culture is composed of countless elements. This idea influenced our decision regarding which patterns to examine and which to exclude from our analysis. We are not the first writers who have had to decide what to include and what to exclude. Leading scholars in the area of intercultural communication have advanced numerous classifications and typologies. While there is obviously a great deal of overlap among these systems, it might help you appreciate the problems associated with isolating key patterns if we pause for a moment and mention some tools that five different scholars have developed to help them investigate and explain different cultures. Gannon uses a four-stage model, which employs cultural metaphors to help explain cultural differences.³³ Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner have established different categories to help examine and compare cultures.³⁴ Although Grondona focuses on economic development, he presents an excellent typology of seventeen cultural patterns (which he calls "VALUE systems") that can offer significant insight into a culture.³⁵ Weaver maintains that cultures can be studied and compared through eight separate cultural dimensions, which can be further divided into numerous subsets.³⁶

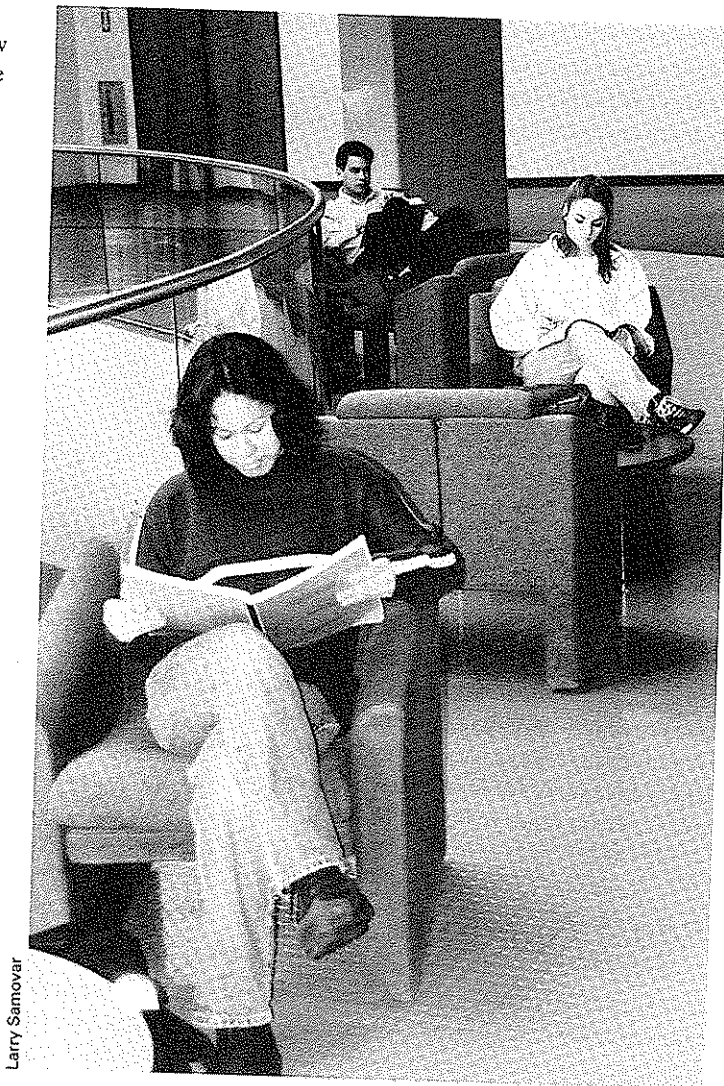
These four different cultural pattern typologies developed by different scholars should give you an appreciation of the complexity and difficulty of deciding which patterns to include and which to exclude. However, two ideas should be apparent as we begin to isolate specific patterns. First, for most scholars of intercultural communication, cultural patterns are points lying on a continuum. The rationale is a simple one—cultural differences are usually a matter of degree. Second, there is a great deal of duplication and overlap in any discussion of cultural patterns. In fact, many of the patterns we have selected to discuss in detail are also part of the taxonomies developed by those authors just mentioned.

DOMINANT UNITED STATES CULTURAL PATTERNS

We have already alluded to the difficulties of using a specific cultural pattern to characterize an entire culture. This problem is even more acute when one is dealing with the United States and its diverse multiethnic population. Charon notes, "Listing American values is a difficult task because there are so many exceptions and contradictions," but adds, "On a general level, Americans do share a value system."³⁷ Kim echoes this notion when she writes, "There are similar characteristics that all Americans share, regardless of their age, race, gender, or ethnicity."³⁸

Although this book tends to focus on explaining other cultures, we nevertheless believe that a section devoted to some selected American cultural patterns would be helpful. For people who are not members of the dominant culture, we hope this discussion of cultural patterns will provide new insights and understanding. For those who are members of the dominant culture, we offer our analysis of cultural patterns for three reasons. First, as we have said throughout this book, people carry their culture wherever they go, and that culture influences how they respond to the people they meet. Second, examining one's own cultural patterns can reveal information about culture that is often overlooked or taken for granted. Finally, one's cultural patterns can serve as an important reference point for making comparisons among other cultures.

One indication of individualism is how U. S. Americans use space.



Larry Samovar

In this section, we will limit our discussion of American cultural patterns to the dominant culture, as defined in Chapter 1. As you will recall, we said that regardless of the culture being studied, the dominant culture is that part of a population that controls and dominates the major economic and social institutions and determines the flow and content of information. In the United States, that group has been, and largely continues to be, white, male, and of European heritage.³⁹

Individualism

The single most important cultural pattern in the United States is individualism, often referred to as “freedom” by Americans.⁴⁰ Broadly speaking, individualism, as developed in the works of the seventeenth-century English philosopher John Locke, holds that each person is unique, special, completely different from all other individuals, and

"the basic unit of nature."⁴¹ Locke's view is simple: The interests of the individual are or ought to be paramount, and all values, rights, and duties originate in individuals. The value of individualism is so commanding that many other imperative American values spring from individualism. Gannon underscores the link between individualism and other values when he writes:

"Equality of opportunity, independence, initiative, and self-reliance are some of the values that have remained as basic American ideals throughout history. All of these values are expressive of a high degree of individualism."⁴²

This emphasis on the individual is also found elsewhere in the world, but it has emerged as the cornerstone of American culture. The origin of this value in the United States has had a long history. It arose from the first settlers' desire to escape the repressive social conditions that then existed in European society.⁴³ Whether one is considering sexual, social, or ethical matters, for Americans the self holds the pivotal position. So strong is this notion that some Americans consider that a person who fails to demonstrate individuality is out of step with society. Whether it is conveyed by literature, art, or American history, the message is the same: individual achievement, sovereignty, and freedom are the virtues most glorified and canonized.

American role models, be they the cowboys of the Old West or action heroes in today's movies and electronic games, are all portrayed as independent agents who accomplish their goals with little or no assistance. The individual is self-reliant; to depend on someone else implies weakness or loss of freedom. The result is that most Americans believe that all persons have a separate identity, which should be recognized and reinforced. As Kim points out, "In America, what counts is who you are, not who others around you are. A person tends to be judged on his or her own merit."⁴⁴

Equal Opportunity

Closely related to individualism is the American value of equality. The preamble to the United States Declaration of Independence states that "all men are created equal."⁴⁵ This concept is further enshrined in the Constitution, which states, "No Title of Nobility shall be granted by the United States."⁴⁶ The founders of the United States were intent on ensuring that a social class system like the English one they had escaped from (a landed, hereditary aristocracy) did not develop in the United States. This opportunity for self-betterment was a powerful inducement for the succeeding waves of immigrants to flee Europe's class-based social systems.⁴⁷

Rather than focus on the literal meaning of "created equal," let us look at the ideals behind those words, which we believe were best explained by Abraham Lincoln in 1860, when he said, "we do wish to allow the humblest man an equal chance to get rich with everybody else." Thus, the value that pervades contemporary U.S. society is best termed "equal opportunity." All people should have the same opportunity to succeed in life, and the state, through laws and educational opportunities, is expected to ensure that right.

The American value of equal opportunity translates into equality and informality in social relationships. For instance, most of the primary social relationships within a family tend to promote equality rather than hierarchy. Formality is not important, and children are often treated as adults. In secondary relationships, most friendships and coworkers are also treated as equals, usually interacting on a first-name basis.

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People from cultures that adhere to formal social structures often find it disconcerting to work with Americans, whom they believe diminish the value of social status differences. We do not mean to imply that Americans completely ignore hierarchy. Instead, according to Althen, Americans tend to rely on more subtle ways to mark status, such as "tone of voice, order of speaking, choice of words, [and] seating arrangements."⁴⁸

We would be remiss, when describing the dominant culture in the United States, if we did not once again remind you of some of the contradictions that often exist when we speak of individualism and equality. The history of the United States is replete with examples of discrimination based on gender, skin color, ethnic group membership, level of education, social class, sexual preference, and even choice of religion. Unfortunately, today some people still continue to use these criteria to evaluate others. While she acknowledges that many Americans have experienced periods of inequality, Hanson is correct when she writes, "Not all citizens have had equal rights throughout the course of the country's history, but Americans nevertheless value the notion highly and strive toward this ideal."⁴⁹

Material Acquisition

Acquiring material possessions has always been an integral part of life for most Americans. As Stewart and Bennett note, "Americans consider it almost a right to be materially well off and physically comfortable."⁵⁰ Althen offers the same idea when he writes that Americans consider their materialistic nature "natural and proper."⁵¹ However, Americans have historically been willing to work hard to realize their dreams. Thus, the acquisition of material possessions, such as a large home, a variety of clothes for every occasion, convenient personal transportation, and a large selection of foods, is considered the just reward for hard work.

Science and Technology

For most Americans, science and technology, or what Clark calls "the value of know how,"⁵² take on the qualities often associated with a god. The following inscription, found on the National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C., expresses the same idea: "Modern civilization depends on science." Clark maintains that Americans think that scientific and technical knowledge is linked to their very survival.⁵³ This strong belief gives rise to the notion among most Americans that nothing is impossible when scientists, engineers, and inventors put their minds to a task. From fixing interpersonal relationships to exploring outer space, science has the answer.

The American respect for science is based on two assumptions: that reality can be rationally ordered by humans, and that such an ordering, using the scientific method, can enable people to predict and control much of life. This emphasis on science reflects the values of the rationalistic-individualistic tradition that is so deeply embedded in Western civilization. As evident in the works of John Locke, Francis Bacon, René Descartes, Bertrand Russell, and Albert Einstein, people in Western cultures have long believed that all problems can be solved by science. This emphasis on rationality and science, according to Macionis, helps "explain our cultural tendency (especially among men) to devalue emotion and intuition as sources of knowledge."⁵⁴ While Westerners tend to prize rationality, objectivity, empirical evidence, and the scientific method, these views often clash with those of cultures that value and believe in fatalism, subjectivity, mysticism, and intuition.

Progress and Change

In the United States, as Hanson reminds us, "Change, newness, and progress are all highly valued."⁵⁵ From altering their personal appearance through cosmetic surgery, to changing where they live at a faster rate than any other people in the world, Americans do not value the status quo. Nor have they ever. "Early Americans cleared forests, drained swamps, and altered the course of rivers in order to 'build' the country. Contemporary Americans have gone to the moon in part to prove they could do so."⁵⁶ Ever since the country's earliest days as a distinct national entity, people have subscribed to diffuse constellation of beliefs and attitudes that may be called the cult of progress. Various aspects of this orientation are optimism, receptivity to change, emphasis on the future rather than the past or present, faith in an ability to control all phases of life, and confidence in the perceptual ability of the common person. You can observe this passion for change and progress in the way that Americans have traditionally approached the environment—as something to be conquered, tamed, or harnessed for social or personal benefit.

As we discuss later in the chapter, many older, more traditional cultures, which have witnessed civilizations rise and fall and believe in fatalism, do not easily embrace change, progress, and daring and often have difficulty understanding the American disregard for history and tradition. As Althen notes:

This fundamental American belief in progress and a better future contrasts sharply with the fatalistic (Americans are likely to use that term with a negative or critical connotation) attitude that characterizes people from many other cultures, notably Latin, Asian, and Arab, where there is a pronounced reverence for the past. In those cultures the future is considered to be in the hands of "fate," "God," or at least the few powerful people or families that dominate the society. The idea that people in general can somehow shape their own futures seems naïve, arrogant, or even sacrilegious.⁵⁷

CONSIDER THIS



The high rate of volunteerism in the United States is a product of the value placed on "doing something," which motivated over 26 percent of the population to engage in volunteer work between September 2006 and September 2007.⁵⁹

Think of some examples of activities, other than work, that people in the United States engage in to "keep busy." How could this "doing" orientation create problems in an intercultural marriage in which one party holds the "doing" orientation while the other partner values a slow-paced life?

Work and Play

As we mentioned earlier, work occupies an important position, both past and present, in the United States, as disclosed by McElroy:

The primary American cultural beliefs derive from the initial experience of European settlers in the future United States. They all relate to work, the first necessity for survival in a wilderness. It was the peculiar experiences of work—what kind was done, who did it, how much it was rewarded—that began the process of distinguishing American behavior from European behavior, which led during the next eight generations to the formation of a new American culture.⁵⁸

The value associated with work is so important in the United States that people meet each other for the first time frequently ask each other, "What do you do?" Embedded in this simple query is the belief that working (doing something) is important. For most Americans, work represents a cluster of moral and affective conditions of attractiveness, while voluntary idleness often is seen as a severely threatening and degrading social condition.

A major reward for this hard work, and an important American value, is leisure. For Americans, leisure time is something they have earned. It is relief from the regularity of work and it is in play that we find real joy. This emphasis on recreation and relaxation takes many forms. Each weekend people rush to get away in their RVs, play golf or tennis, go fishing, ride their mountain bikes, go to the beach, or "relax" at a gambling casino, a racetrack, or a movie.

Competitive Nature

A professional football coach Vince Lombardi once said, "Winning isn't everything, but it's the only thing."⁶⁰ This attitude toward competition is an integral part of life in the United States and is taught from early childhood on. Whether it is through school games or being continually asked to answer questions in the classroom, a competitive nature is encouraged among children in the United States. People are ranked, graded, classified, and evaluated so that everyone will know who the best is. Many "Top 10" lists of people, schools, hospitals, and vacation locations provided by the media illustrate our competitive nature. Young people are enculturated with the idea that if they lose and it does not bother them, there must be something wrong with them. As Kim points out, "For competitive Americans, who hate losing, everything in life is a game to win."⁶¹

Competition is another pattern that often causes problems for Americans when they interact with people who do not share this value. For instance, "Asians believe that it is neither necessary nor beneficial to be obsessed with winning."⁶² Harris and Moran suggest that the French may view individuals in the workplace with a competitive drive as being antagonistic, ruthless, and power hungry,⁶³ because French adhere to "social values that emphasize family ties" over work.⁶⁴

DIFFERING CULTURAL PATTERNS

As far as we have discussed some cultural characteristics as they apply to the dominant culture in the United States. We are now ready to make some cultural comparisons. As we mentioned earlier in this chapter, many anthropologists, social psychologists, and communication scholars have devised taxonomies that can be used to analyze the key behavioral patterns found in every culture. While these classification lists are numerous, there are four that seem to be at the core of most intercultural communication studies. The first classification, developed by Hofstede, identifies five value dimensions (individualism/collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, masculinity/femininity, and long-term/short-term orientation) that are influenced and modified by culture. The second group of orientations (human nature, person/nature orientation, time, activity, and relational orientation) comes from the anthropological work of the Kluckhohns and Strodtbeck. Our third taxonomy, advanced by E.T.

Hall, looks at how high-context and low-context cultures respond to various message systems. The final cultural pattern was developed from research by intercultural communication scholar Ting-Toomey, whose research has highlighted the role of "face" and "face-work" in intercultural communication.

HOFSTEDE'S VALUE DIMENSIONS⁶⁵

Hofstede's work was one of the earliest attempts to use extensive statistical data to examine cultural values. In carrying out his research, Hofstede ultimately surveyed more than one hundred thousand managers in a multinational organization, from fifty countries and three geographical regions. After careful analysis, each country and region was assigned a rank of 1 through 50 in each of his studies, using four identified value dimensions (individualism/collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, masculinity/femininity). Subsequent research involving participants from twenty-three nations revealed a fifth dimension (long-term/short-term orientation) and these countries were ordered 1 through 23. These rankings not only offer a clear picture of what was valued in each culture, but also help you see comparisons across cultures. Hofstede's contention was clear. He argued "that people carry 'mental programs' that are developed in the family in early childhood and reinforced in schools and organizations . . . [mental programs] are most clearly expressed in the values that predominate among people from different countries."⁶⁶

We need to continue to remind you that when we indicate that a culture is characterized by one of the value dimensions, we are referring to the majority of the dominant culture. Within every culture you will find individuals all along a particular value continuum. For example, in the United States, some members of the dominant culture possess strong collective tendencies. Conversely, in a group-oriented culture such as Japan, you can find individuals that subscribe to, and assert, individuality. Therefore, in any intercultural encounter, you must be mindful that the other person or persons may not adhere to the norm for their culture.

Individualism/collectivism

We first mentioned the cultural dimensions of individualism and collectivism in Chapter 2, while examining the functions of family. We now return to the topic for a more comprehensive discussion. As a result of numerous scholarly studies, individualism versus collectivism (individual orientation versus group orientation) has been established "as one of the basic pattern variables that determine human action."⁶⁷ As Ting-Toomey and Chung note, "Individualistic and collectivistic value tendencies are manifested in *everyday family, school, and workplace* interactions."⁶⁸

How are values of individualism and collectivism manifested? Andersen and his colleagues offer us an excellent answer to that question by defining the traits of the individualism/collectivism continuum:

Collectivistic cultures emphasize community, collaboration, shared interest, harmony, tradition, the public good, and maintaining face. Individualistic cultures emphasize personal rights and responsibilities, privacy, voicing one's own opinion, freedom, innovation, and self-expression.⁶⁹

With this synopsis in mind, we will now look at the two dimensions in detail.

Having already touched on individualism when we looked at American culture, we now need only to identify some of its components. First, the individual is the single most important unit in any social setting. Second, independence rather than interdependence is stressed. Third, individual achievement is rewarded. Lastly, the uniqueness of each individual is of paramount value.⁷⁰ According to Hofstede's findings (see Table 5.1), the United States, Australia, Great Britain, Canada, the Netherlands, and New Zealand all tend toward individualism. Goleman highlights some of the characteristics of these and other cultures that value individualism:

People's personal goals take priority over their allegiance to groups like the family or the employer. The loyalty of individualists to a given group is very weak; they feel they belong to many groups and are apt to change their membership as it suits them, switching churches, for example, or leaving one employer for another.⁷¹

TABLE 5.1 Individualism/Collectivism Values for Fifty Countries and Three Regions

RANK	COUNTRY	RANK	COUNTRY
1	United States	28	Turkey
2	Australia	29	Uruguay
3	Great Britain	30	Greece
4/5	Canada/Netherlands	31	Philippines
4/5	Netherlands	32	Mexico
6	New Zealand	33/35	Yugoslavia
7	Italy	33/35	Portugal
8	Belgium	33/35	East Africa
9	Denmark	36	Malaysia
10/11	Sweden	37	Hong Kong
10/11	France	38	Chile
12	Ireland	39/41	Singapore
13	Norway	39/41	Thailand
14	Switzerland	39/41	West Africa
15	Germany	42	El Salvador
16	South Africa	43	South Korea
17	Finland	44	Taiwan
18	Austria	45	Peru
19	Israel	46	Costa Rica
20	Spain	47/48	Pakistan
21	India	47/48	Indonesia
22/23	Japan	49	Colombia
22/23	Argentina	50	Venezuela
24	Iran	51	Panama
25	Jamaica	52	Ecuador
26/27	Brazil	53	Guatemala
26/27	Arab countries		

The lower the number, the more the country promotes individualism. A higher number means the country is more collective. Source: Adapted from Geert Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations Across Nations*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2001).

Individualism in the United States is exercised by frequent job changes. In other words, it is both common and even expected that employees will change jobs in order to advance themselves. Conversely, in Japan individuals have traditionally expected to remain with the same company for their entire career. To change jobs would be disloyal to the company and the other employees. In today's transnational, multicultural workplace, it is easy to imagine how conflicts could arise from a clash of cultural values related to individualism and collectivism.

COLLECTIVISM

"A defining character of people in collectivist cultures is their notable concern with relationships."⁷² These relationships form a rigid social framework that distinguishes between in-groups and out-groups. People rely on their in-groups (e.g., relatives, clans, tribes, and organizations) to look after them, and in exchange they believe they owe loyalty to the group. Triandis suggests that some of the following behaviors are found in collective cultures:

Collectivism means greater emphasis on (a) the views, needs, and goals of the in-group rather than oneself; (b) social norms and duty defined by the in-group rather than behavior to get pleasure; (c) beliefs shared with the in-group rather than beliefs that distinguish the self from in-group; and (d) great readiness to cooperate with in-group members.⁷³

In collective societies, such as those in Pakistan, Colombia, Venezuela, Taiwan, Peru, and much of Africa and Asia, people are born into extended families or clans that support and protect them in exchange for their allegiance. In many Arabic nations, tribalism predominates. In collectivistic cultures interdependency is typical, and individual considerations

Collective cultures value the group as the most important social entity.



Gloria Thomas

are secondary to the needs and desires of one's in-group. This concept is demonstrated in African societies where, according to Richmond and Gestrin, "Individual needs and achievement, in contrast to the West, take second place to the needs of the many."⁷⁴ This perception of community is explained by Etounga-Manguelle's statement that "African thought rejects any view of the individual as an autonomous and responsible being."⁷⁵

In African and other collective cultures, the individual is emotionally dependent on organizations and institutions, and the culture emphasizes belonging to organizations. Organizations invade private life and the groups to which individuals belong, and individuals trust group decisions even at the expense of personal rights. Characterizing China as a collective culture, Meyer notes, "With individual rights severely subordinated, group action has been a distinctive characteristic of Chinese society."⁷⁶ You can also easily discern the importance of a group orientation in this Chinese proverb: "No matter how stout, one beam cannot support a house."

Numerous co-cultures in the United States can be classified as collective. Research by Hecht, Collier, and Ribeau, for example, concludes that African Americans also exhibit the characteristics of collective societies.⁷⁷ And, according to Luckman, "Hispanics—including Mexican-Americans, Cubans, Salvadorans, Guatemalans, Puerto Ricans, and others—greatly value the family, and often place the needs of the family members above the needs of individuals."⁷⁸

As is the case with all cultural patterns, collectivism influences a number of communication variables. Kim, Sharkey, and Singles, after studying Korean culture, came to believe that traits such as indirect communication, saving face, concern for others, and group cooperation are linked to Korea's collective orientation.⁷⁹ Collectivism is also contextual. For example, in collective classrooms, such as those found in Mexico, harmony and cooperation in learning are stressed instead of competition.⁸⁰ Think of what is being implied in the Mexican saying, "The more we are, the faster we finish." In the health care context, Schneider and Silverman offer the following information on Egyptian collectivism: "Even in illness, Egyptians prefer company. A stream of friends and relatives who bring him soda, food, aspirin, and advice will surround a man who has a headache or a fever. Hospitals are crowded with residents and friends visiting patients."⁸¹

Uncertainty Avoidance

At the core of uncertainty avoidance is the inescapable truism that the future is unknown. Though you may try, you can never predict with 100 percent assurance what someone will do or what might happen in the future. As the term is used by Hofstede, *uncertainty avoidance*:

... defines the extent to which people within a culture are made nervous by situations which they perceive as unstructured, unclear, or unpredictable, situations which they therefore try to avoid by maintaining strict codes of behavior and a belief in absolute truths."⁸²

HIGH-UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE

High-uncertainty avoidance cultures try to avoid uncertainty and ambiguity by providing stability for their members through established, formal social protocols, intolerance of deviant ideas and behaviors, emphasizing consensus, and resistance to

change. These cultures are often characterized by relatively high levels of anxiety and stress. People with this orientation believe that life carries the potential for continual hazards.

To avoid or mitigate these hazards, there is a strong need for written rules, planning, regulations, rituals, ceremonies, and established social, behavioral, and communication protocols, which add structure to life. Nations with a strong uncertainty avoidance tendency are Portugal, Greece, Peru, Belgium, and Japan (see Table 5.2).

LOW-UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE

At the other end of the continuum, we find countries like Sweden, Denmark, Ireland, Norway, the United States, Finland, and the Netherlands, which are considered to be low-uncertainty avoidance cultures. They more easily accept the uncertainty inherent

TABLE 5.2 Uncertainty Avoidance Values for Fifty Countries and Three Regions

RANK	COUNTRY	RANK	COUNTRY
1	Greece	28	Ecuador
2	Portugal	29	Germany
3	Guatemala	30	Thailand
4	Uruguay	31/32	Iran
5/6	Belgium	31/32	Finland
5/6	El Salvador	33	Switzerland
7	Japan	34	West Africa
8	Yugoslavia	35	Netherlands
9	Peru	36	East Africa
10/15	Spain	37	Australia
10/15	Argentina	38	Norway
10/15	Panama	39/40	South Africa
10/15	France	39/40	New Zealand
10/15	Chile	41/42	Indonesia
10/15	Costa Rica	41/42	Canada
16/17	Turkey	43	United States
16/17	South Korea	44	Philippines
18	Mexico	45	India
19	Israel	46	Malaysia
20	Colombia	47/48	Great Britain
21/22	Venezuela	47/48	Ireland
21/22	Brazil	49/50	Hong Kong
23	Italy	49/50	Sweden
24/25	Pakistan	51	Denmark
24/25	Austria	52	Jamaica
26	Taiwan	53	Singapore
27	Arab countries		

The lower the number, the more the country can be classified as one that does not like uncertainty. A higher number is associated with a country that does not feel uncomfortable with uncertainty. Source: Adapted from Geert Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations Across Nations*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2001).

in life, tend to be tolerant of the unusual, and are not as threatened by different ideas and people. They prize initiative, dislike the structure associated with hierarchy, are willing to take risks, are flexible, think that there should be as few rules as possible, and depend not so much on experts as on themselves. As a whole, members of low-uncertainty avoidance cultures are less constrained by social protocol.

As is the case with our other value dimensions, differences in uncertainty avoidance influence intercultural communication. In a classroom composed of children from low-uncertainty avoidance cultures, we might expect to see students feeling comfortable in unstructured learning situations, being rewarded for innovative approaches to problem solving, and recognizing that truth is relative.⁸³ As Hofstede points out, the opposite is the case in high uncertainty avoidance cultures. Here you find that "students expect structured learning situations and seek right answers."⁸⁴

Power Distance

Another cultural value dimension offered by Hofstede is *power distance*, which classifies cultures on a continuum of high and low-power distance. (Some theorists use the terms "large power distance" and "small power distance" instead.) He summarizes the concept of power distance in the following manner: "Power distance as a characteristic of a culture defines the extent to which the less powerful person in society accepts inequality in power and considers it as normal."⁸⁵ The premise of the dimension deals with the extent to which a society prefers that power in relationships, institutions, and organizations be distributed equally or unequally. Although all cultures have tendencies to both high- and low-power distance relationships, one orientation seems to dominate. Foster offers a clear explanation of this dimension:

What Hofstede discovered was that in some cultures, those who hold power and those who are affected by power are significantly far apart (high-power distance) in many ways, while in other cultures, the power holders and those affected by the power holders are significantly closer (low-power distance).⁸⁶

HIGH-POWER DISTANCE

Gudykunst tenders a concise summary of high-power distance cultures when he writes, "Individuals from high-power distance cultures accept power as part of society. As such, superiors consider their subordinates to be different from themselves and vice versa."⁸⁷ People in high-power distance countries such as India, Africa, Brazil, Singapore, Greece, Venezuela, Mexico, and the Philippines (see Table 5.3) believe that power and authority are facts of life. Both consciously and unconsciously, these cultures teach their members that people are not equal in this world and that everybody has a rightful place, which is clearly marked by countless vertical arrangements. Social hierarchy is prevalent and institutionalizes inequality. In organizations within high-power distance cultures, you find a greater centralization of power, more importance placed on status and rank, a larger proportion of supervisory personnel, a structured value system that determines the worth of each job, and subordinates adhering to a rigid hierarchy.⁸⁸

TABLE 5.3 Power Distance Values for Fifty Countries and Three Regions

RANK	COUNTRY	RANK	COUNTRY
1	Malaysia	27/28	South Korea
2/3	Guatemala	29/30	Iran
2/3	Panama	29/30	Taiwan
4	Philippines	31	Spain
5/6	Mexico	32	Pakistan
5/6	Venezuela	33	Japan
7	Arab countries	34	Italy
8/9	Ecuador	35/36	Argentina
8/9	Indonesia	35/36	South Africa
10/11	India	37	Jamaica
10/11	West Africa	38	United States
12	Yugoslavia	39	Canada
13	Singapore	40	Netherlands
14	Brazil	41	Australia
15/16	France	42/44	Costa Rica
15/16	Hong Kong	42/44	Germany
17	Columbia	42/44	Great Britain
18/19	El Salvador	45	Switzerland
18/19	Turkey	46	Finland
20	Belgium	47/48	Norway
21/23	East Africa	47/48	Sweden
21/23	Peru	49	Ireland
21/23	Thailand	50	New Zealand
24/25	Chile	51	Denmark
24/25	Portugal	52	Israel
26	Uruguay	53	Austria
27/28	Greece		

The lower the number, the more the country can be classified as one that has a high-power distance culture. A higher number is associated with a country that has a low-power distance culture. Source: Adapted from Geert Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations Across Nations*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2001).

LOW-POWER DISTANCE

Low-power distance countries such as Austria, Finland, Denmark, Norway, the United States, New Zealand, and Israel hold that inequality in society should be minimized. As Brislin notes, "Cultures referred to as 'low-power distance' are guided by laws, norms, and everyday behaviors that make power distinctions as minimal as possible."⁸⁹ People in these cultures see hierarchy as an inequality of roles established for convenience. Subordinates consider superiors to be the same kind of people as they are, and superiors perceive their subordinates in the same way. People in power, be they supervisors, managers, or government officials, often interact with their constituents and try to look less powerful than they really are.

We can observe signs of this dimension in nearly every communication setting. Within the educational context, Calloway-Thomas, Cooper, and Blake offer the following summary:

In large power distance societies, the educational process is teacher centered. The teacher initiates all communication, outlines the path of learning students should follow, and is never publicly criticized or contradicted. In large power distance societies, the emphasis is on the personal "wisdom" of the teacher, while in small power distance societies the emphasis is on impersonal "truth" that can be obtained by any competent person.⁹¹

According to Hofstede, in a business context with low-power distance you might observe decisions being shared, subordinates being consulted, bosses relying on support teams, and status symbols being kept to a minimum.⁹²

Masculinity/Femininity

Hofstede uses the words *masculinity* and *femininity* to refer to the degree to which masculine or feminine traits are valued and revealed. His rationale, and one that is supported by most anthropologists, psychologists, and political scientists, is that many masculine and feminine behaviors are learned and mediated by cultural norms and traditions.

Adler feels that the terms *masculinity* and *femininity* do not adequately convey the full meaning behind this dimension and chooses to use the terms *career success* and *quality of life*.⁹³ While we agree with Adler's assessment, we will adhere to Hofstede's original titles and suggest you refer to Adler's labels if they help you to understand the dimension.

MASCULINITY

Masculinity is the extent to which the dominant values in a society are male-oriented. Hofstede advances an excellent summary of these values when he notes:

Masculine cultures use the biological existence of two sexes to define very different social roles for men and women. They expect men to be assertive, ambitious, and competitive, and to strive for material success, and to respect whatever is big, strong, and fast.⁹⁴

CONSIDER THIS



While campaigning in Pennsylvania during the 2008 Democratic presidential primary, Senator Hillary Clinton "showed her blue-collar bona fides one night by knocking down a shot of whiskey, then taking a mug of beer as a chaser. Senator Barack Obama, her opponent, went bowling in his attempt to win over working-class voters."⁹⁰ Later, we saw Obama take his daughters to a roller-skating rink in Indiana and Clinton make a stop at North Carolina's Auto Racing Hall of Fame.

What were some other examples of activities engaged in by the Republican and Democratic presidential candidates that were designed to lower their power profile?

TABLE 5.4 Masculinity Values for Fifty Countries and Three Regions

RANK	COUNTRY	RANK	COUNTRY
1	Japan	28	Singapore
2/3	Austria	29	Israel
2/3	Venezuela	30/31	Indonesia
4/5	Italy	30/31	West Africa
4/5	Switzerland	32/33	Turkey
6	Mexico	32/33	Taiwan
7/8	Ireland	34	Panama
7/8	Jamaica	35/36	Iran
9/10	Great Britain	35/36	France
9/10	Germany	37/38	Spain
11/12	Philippines	37/38	Peru
11/12	Colombia	39	East Africa
13/14	South Africa	40	El Salvador
13/14	Ecuador	41	South Korea
15	United States	42	Uruguay
16	Australia	43	Guatemala
17	New Zealand	44	Thailand
18/19	Greece	45	Portugal
18/19	Hong Kong	46	Chile
20/21	Argentina	47	Finland
20/21	India	48/49	Yugoslavia
22	Belgium	48/49	Costa Rica
23	Arab countries	50	Denmark
24	Canada	51	Netherlands
25/26	Malaysia	52	Norway
25/26	Pakistan	53	Sweden
27	Brazil		

The lower the number, the more the country can be classified as one that favors masculine traits; a higher score denotes a country that prefers feminine traits. Source: Adapted from Geert Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations Across Nations*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2001).

Ireland, the Philippines, Greece, Venezuela, Austria, Japan, Italy, and Mexico are among the countries where you can find many of the masculine values described by Hofstede (see Table 5.4). Adler reports that masculine cultures have highly defined gender roles and promote career success. "Assertiveness and the acquisition of money and things (materialism)"⁹⁵ are emphasized and often take precedence over interpersonal relationships. Ireland provides an example of the influence of strong gender roles in a masculine-oriented culture. Despite the high level of economic development, in 2007 women were elected to only 35 of the 226 combined seats available in the Upper and Lower Houses, which demonstrates a low level of political empowerment.⁹⁶

FEMININITY

Cultures that value femininity as a trait stress nurturing behaviors. A feminine worldview maintains that men need not be assertive and that they can assume nurturing roles. It also promotes sexual equality and holds that people and the environment are

important. In addition, in feminine cultures there tends to be "weak gender differentiation in the socialization of children."⁹⁷ Interdependence and androgynous behavior are the ideal, and people sympathize with those less fortunate. Nations such as Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark, and the Netherlands tend toward a feminine worldview. Quite in contrast to the masculine culture of Ireland, in Sweden, which had the highest ranking in Hofstede's femininity category, women occupied 47.3 percent of the 349 legislative positions following the 2006 election, which suggests a high level of political empowerment.⁹⁸

The impact of masculinity/femininity on a culture can also be observed in the "gender gap" measure. In 2005, a World Economic Forum study measured the gender gap in fifty-eight countries, using five aspects of women's empowerment and opportunity: economic participation; economic opportunity; political empowerment; educational attainment; and health and well-being. Sweden and Norway were ranked first and second, respectively; the United States was seventeenth, Japan thirty-eighth, and Mexico fifty-second.⁹⁹ These rankings generally parallel Hofstede's findings.

Long- and Short-term Orientation

Over the years, there has been some condemnation of Hofstede's work. One major criticism deals with the Western bias he used when he collected the data.¹⁰⁰ As a means of overcoming this problem, Hofstede offered a new dimension called long- versus short-term orientation, also referred to as "Confucian Dynamism."¹⁰¹ This study, involving twenty-three countries, used an assessment called the Chinese Value Survey (CVS), "an instrument developed by Michael Harris Bond in Hong Kong from values suggested by Chinese scholars."¹⁰² Hofstede summarizes the link between this fifth orientation and Confucianism:

The long-term/short-term orientation dimension appears to be based on items reminiscent of the teachings of Confucius, on both poles. It opposes long-term to short-term aspects of Confucian thinking: persistence and thrift to personal stability and respect for tradition.¹⁰³

You can observe how these patterns would influence interaction in a variety of settings. For example, cultures that rank high on long-term orientation (such as China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea) would most likely have employees who reflect a strong work ethic and show great respect for status differences. You could expect individuals who are members of these cultures to value social order and long-range goals. Those cultures that rank low on the long-term orientation index (the United States, Great Britain, Canada, the Philippines), according to Hofstede, often do not place a high priority on status, try to postpone old age, are concerned with short-term results, and seek quick gratification of their needs.¹⁰⁴

THE KLUCKHOHNS AND STRODTBECK'S VALUE ORIENTATIONS

Our next taxonomy is from the Kluckhohns and Strodtbeck, who were cultural anthropologists (see Table 5.5), although other researchers have added to their findings.¹⁰⁵ The Kluckhohns and Strodtbeck based their research on the notion that every individual, regardless of culture, must deal with five universal questions. Although they used

TABLE 5.5 Five Value Orientations from Kluckhohn, Kluckhohn, and Strodtbeck

ORIENTATION		VALUES AND BEHAVIOR	
Human nature	Basically evil	Mixture of good and evil	Basically good
Humankind and nature	People subjugated to nature	People in harmony with nature	People the master of nature
Sense of time	Past oriented	Present oriented	Future oriented
Activity	Being	Being in becoming	Doing
Social relationships	Authoritarian	Group oriented	Individualism

Source: F.R. Kluckhohn and F.L. Strodtbeck, *Variations in Value Orientations* (New York: Row and Peterson), 1960.

the phrase “value orientations” to describe these five questions, they were in fact talking about what we have to this point called cultural patterns. These patterns tell the members of the culture what is important and offer them guidance for living their lives.¹⁰⁶ After examining numerous cultures, the Kluckhohns and Strodtbeck concluded that all people turn to their culture to assist them in answering the same five basic questions:

1. What is the character of human nature?
2. What is the relation of humankind to nature?
3. What is the orientation toward time?
4. What is the value placed on activity?
5. What is the relationship of people to each other?¹⁰⁷

Two important points need to be made before we turn to a specific explanation of the five dimensions advanced by the Kluckhohns and Strodtbeck. First, as was the case with Hofstede’s ranking from 1 to 50, the Kluckhohns and Strodtbeck’s five orientations are best visualized as points along a continuum. Second, as you move through these five orientations, you will notice that some of the characteristics, while they might have different names, are similar to the ones discussed by Hofstede. This is understandable in that both approaches are talking about meaningful values found, to varying degrees, in all cultures. Hence, both sets of research were bound to track many of the same patterns.

Human Nature Orientation

Nearly all judgments about human behavior, be they moral or legal, begin with this core question: What is the character of human nature? Was Anne Frank right when she wrote in *The Diary of a Young Girl*, “In spite of everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart”? Or was the philosopher Immanuel Kant correct when he observed, “Out of the crooked timber of humanity no straight thing can ever be made”?

For centuries, religious leaders, philosophers, scholars, and others have pondered questions concerning human nature. Borrowman’s brief catalog offers you an example of some of these questions:

What are the relative effects of “grace,” “will,” genetic heredity, geographical conditions, social institutions, and historical accident on the behavior of an individual? Would the “natural” man tend toward love and altruism in his treatment of others, or would he be

dominated by greed and brutality? Is reason capable of dominating the behavior of man or merely a tool which he uses to mediate between demands of an insatiable id and an uncompromising super-ego?¹⁰⁸

Your answers to the questions posed by Borrowman represent a powerful force in how you live your life. As Stevenson and Haberman tell us, "Different conceptions of human nature lead to different views about what we ought to do and how we can do it."¹⁰⁹ Although all people on an individual basis answer questions about human nature, there are also cultural explanations for why people act as they do.

Most discussions of human nature usually deal with divisions of evil, good and evil, and good. Let us look at each of these issues and examine how they often differ from culture to culture.

EVIL

Some cultures begin with the premise that people are intrinsically evil. In the United States, this orientation, which was inherited from Puritan ancestors, was the prevailing view for many years. In the last hundred years, however, U.S. Americans have come to see themselves as a mixture of good and evil. That is, most Americans now believe they are "perfectible." By following certain rules, they can change, improve, and "be saved." According to this analysis, with constant hard work, control, education, and self-discipline, people can achieve goodness. You can also notice this self-help approach to life in Christianity. For Christians, God is the father and humans are his children. As is the case with all children, they get guidance but must also make choices. According to Christianity, "We are rational beings, we have self-consciousness, and we have free choice."¹¹⁰ Through those choices, we can move from being corrupt to being good.

A more restrictive view of the goodness or evilness of human nature is found in parts of the Arab world. Where Islam is strong, you can find cultures that are imbued with the notion that people have a penchant for evil and therefore cannot, when left to their own resources, be trusted to make a correct decision. Hence, to help control the actions of their members, numerous institutions, ranging from the religious to the political, are designed to monitor and manage behavior. As discussed in Chapter 3, Islam came to the Middle East at a time when the Bedouin culture was plagued with immorality and hedonism. Allah was needed, the people thought, to save the sinners.

GOOD AND EVIL

People who hold the Taoist worldview believe that the universe is best seen from the perspective of *yang* and *yin*, an infinite system of opposing elements and forces in balanced dynamic interaction. Two of the forces present in this universe are good and evil. Since humanity is part of the universe, these forces are naturally present in humankind. This idea is clearly seen in the notion of the *yang* and *yin* cycle. Periodic increases in *yang* are accompanied by corresponding decreases in *yin*; this is followed by an opposite cycle in which *yin* increases while *yang* decreases. This view of the good and evil nature of humanity extends the position that people cannot eliminate evil, because it is a natural and necessary part of the universe.

We should add that many Europeans, for very different reasons, also have a dualistic (good/evil) approach to human nature. Specifically, they believe that while we might be born with a propensity for evil, through learning and education people can become good.

GOOD

Perhaps the most extreme view of the innate goodness of human nature can be found in the philosophies of Confucianism and Buddhism. Most interpretations of the writings of Confucius maintain that he was "very optimistic" about human nature.¹¹¹ Hundreds of years later, we see this same view toward the innate goodness of people in the words of the Chinese philosopher Lu Wang: "Human nature is originally good." Buddhism also maintains that you are born pure and are closest to what is called "loving kindness" when you enter this world. Hence, people are good, but their culture often makes them evil.

Cutting across the arguments concerning the good and evil of human nature has been the question of the essential rationality of human nature. Throughout history, there has been tension between those who believe in fate or mystic powers and those who believe that the intellect can solve any problem and discover any truth. Imagine, for a moment, your perceptions of reality if you are French and take the rational approach characteristic of Descartes' philosophy, or if you are an American Indian and believe that forces external to you control much of your thinking and behavior. To cite another example, the Hindu relies on mysticism, intuition, and spiritual awareness to understand the nature of reality. A belief in fate, as opposed to one that stresses free will, is bound to yield different conclusions.

Person/Nature Orientation

HUMAN BEINGS SUBJECT TO NATURE

The differences among conceptions of the relationship between humanity and nature produce distinct frames of reference for human desires, attitudes, and behaviors. At one end of the scale devised by the Kluckhohns and Strodtbeck is the view that maintains human beings are subject to nature. Cultures that hold this orientation believe that the most powerful forces of life are beyond their control. Whether the force be a god, fate, or magic, a person cannot overcome it and must therefore learn to accept it. This orientation is found in India and parts of South America. For the Hindu, because everything is part of a unified force, "the world of distinct and separate objects and processes is a manifestation of a more fundamental reality that is undivided and unconditional."¹¹² This "oneness" with the world helps create a vision of a world operating in harmony. In Mexico and among Mexican Americans, there is a strong tie to Catholicism and the role of fate in controlling life and nature. As Purnell notes, "a stoic acceptance of the ways things are"¹¹³ is at the heart of this worldview.

COOPERATION WITH NATURE

The middle or so-called cooperation view is widespread and is associated with East Asians. In Japan and Thailand, there is a perception that nature is part of life and not a hostile force waiting to be subdued. This orientation affirms that people should, in every way possible, live in harmony with nature. To cite another example, the desire to be part of nature and not control it has always been strong among American Indians. As Joe and Malach note, "Tribal groups continue to teach respect for the land and to forbid desecration of their ancestral lands. These groups also carry out various ceremonies and rituals to ensure harmony with as well as protection of the land (Mother

Many groups teach their members to respect and live in harmony with nature.



Robert Fonseca

Earth).¹¹⁴ This orientation is eloquently summarized in a statement attributed to Chief Seattle, leader of the Suquamish of Washington State: "Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web we do to ourselves. All things are bound together—all things connect."

CONTROLLING NATURE

At the other end of the scale is the view that compels us to conquer and direct the forces of nature to our advantage. This value orientation is characteristic of the Western approach, which, as we noted earlier in the chapter, has a long tradition of valuing technology, change, and science. Americans have historically believed that nature was something that could and had to be mastered. Even our language reflects this orientation. Early West European immigrants to North America encountered a vast, unforgiving wilderness that they set about to "tame," and modern astronauts are working to "conquer" space. People with this orientation see a clear separation between humans and nature.

We can often find examples of cultures clashing because of divergent views on how to relate to nature. A case in point is the ongoing controversy between the dominant American culture and some American Indian tribes who object to widespread extraction of natural resources, such as strip-mining of coal and clear-cutting of timber, because it disfigures the earth and displaces spirits worshipped by the tribes. Our cultural orientation toward controlling nature can be seen in a host of other instances.

Probably the most controversial contemporary examples are bioengineering and stem cell research.

Time Orientation

As a species, our fixation with time and the power we give it are rather obvious. As is the case with most of the issues discussed in this book, cultures vary widely in their perspective toward time. Where they differ is in the respective values placed on the past, present, and future and on how each influences interaction. So important is a culture's use of time that we develop the subject in detail in Chapter 7, but for now let us simply highlight some of the major cultural differences in the perception of time as it applies to the Kluckhohn, Kluckhohn, and Strodtbeck taxonomy.

PAST ORIENTATION

Past-oriented cultures believe strongly in the significance of prior events. History, established religions, and tradition are extremely important to these cultures, so there is a strong belief that the past should be the guide for making decisions and determining truth. You can see this orientation in China, which because of its long and resplendent history continues to respect the past. Chu and Ju found that respect for their historical heritage was considered the most important traditional value among Chinese.¹¹⁵ There is even a famous Chinese proverb that states, "The past is as clear as a mirror, the future as dark as lacquer." In Japan, where Shintoism is strong and reverence toward ancestors is important, the past still remains paramount. Great Britain, because of its devotion to tradition, including the continuation of a monarchy, resists change as it continues to value its historical achievements. France is yet another culture that can be understood by exploring its view of the past. The French, on many levels, venerate the past. As Hall and Hall tell us:

The importance of French history to the average French person can hardly be overstated. The French live surrounded by thousands of monuments to their glorious past. Every quarter in Paris has its historically important statues, buildings, or fountains, daily reminders of past achievements. French villages have statues to local heroes and important political leaders. As a result of this constant immersion in history, the French tend to see things in their historical context and relate contemporary events to their origins.¹¹⁶

In the United States, American Indians—in part because of their strong oral tradition—also value the past. Many of their stories, in fact, use the past to set examples and to "provide moral guidelines by which one should live."¹¹⁷

PRESENT ORIENTATION

Present-oriented cultures hold that the immediate moment has the most significance, because they see the future as vague, ambiguous, and unknown. For these cultures, what is real exists in the here and now, and the present should be enjoyed. People of the Philippines and most Latin American countries usually hold these beliefs. Mexican Americans also "prefer to experience life and people around them fully in the present."¹¹⁸ Luckmann suggests that this view is also characteristic of the African-American co-culture.¹¹⁹

FUTURE ORIENTATION

Future-oriented cultures, such as the U.S. dominant culture, emphasize what is to come, and expect the future to be grander than the present. What is going to happen holds the greatest attraction for most Americans because whatever we are doing is not quite as good as what we could be doing; things will always be better in the future. This does not mean that Americans have no regard for the past or no thought of the present, but it is certainly true that most Americans, in thought or action, tend to look forward.

Like many other orientations, a person's view of time is related to a host of other values. For example, Americans' view of the future makes them optimistic. This is reflected in the common proverb "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again." This optimistic view of the future also sees Americans believing they can control the future. This belief was clearly spelled out by former President Lyndon Johnson when he told all Americans that "Yesterday is not ours to recover, but tomorrow is ours to win or to lose."

IMAGINE THIS

Alex, a junior at State University, was having coffee with his friend Brenda. Alex looked around and said, "We've been here for over three years now. I am ready to graduate and get a job. Ten years from now, I'll have a good paying job in retail management. I am going to invest my money for the future, because I want to be able to retire early. Can you guess what I want to do after retiring? I'd like to buy an RV and see all the national parks."

What do you think might happen if Alex married someone from a present-orientation culture?

Activity Orientation

Activity orientation is the way a culture views activity. Three common approaches to activity, as detailed by the Kluckhohns and Strodtbeck, are classified as being, being-in-becoming, and doing.

BEING ORIENTATION

A *being* orientation refers to spontaneous expression of the human personality. As Adler and Jelinek point out, "People in being-orientated cultures accept people, events, and ideas as flowing spontaneously. They stress release, indulgence of existing desires, and working for the moment."¹²⁰ Most Latino cultures have the view that the current activity is the one that matters the most. In Mexico, for example, people take great delight in the simple act of conversation with family and friends. Mexicans will talk for hours with their companions, for they believe that the act of "being" is one of the main goals and joys of life. Gannon observes that

"[Mexicans] value leisure time spent with their family and friends more highly than work . . . [because] they are motivated by affiliation rather than achievement, and their emphasis is on being rather than doing."¹²¹

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is in part
determined by
culture.



Richard Porter

BEING-IN-BECOMING ORIENTATION

The *being-in-becoming* orientation stresses the idea of development and growth. It emphasizes the kind of activity that contributes to the development of all aspects of the self as an integral whole. This usually correlates with cultures that value a spiritual life more than a material one. For example, in both Hinduism and Buddhism, people spend a portion of their lives in meditation and contemplation in an attempt to purify and fully advance themselves. Many of the New Age religious movements in the United States also stress the need to develop the being-in-becoming approach to daily life.

DOING ORIENTATION

The *doing* orientation describes activity in which accomplishments are measurable by standards external to the individual. The key to this orientation is a value system that stresses activity and action. It is the doing orientation that most characterizes the dominant American culture. Kim offers an excellent synopsis of Americans' attitude toward doing and activity in the following paragraph:

Americans are action oriented; they are go-getters. They get going, get things done, and get ahead. In America, people gather for action—to play basketball, to dance, to go to a concert. When groups gather they play games or watch videos. Many Americans don't have the patience to sit down and talk. . . . Life is in constant motion.¹²

The doing orientation of a culture impinges on many other beliefs and values. Your definition of activity affects your perception of work, efficiency, change, time, and progress.

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Even the pace at which you live your life—from how fast you walk to the speed at which you reach conclusions—is related to where you land on the being/doing scale. Americans have long admired and rewarded people who can make rapid decisions and “speak up” quickly, and they even become impatient with people who are too reflective. Writing about American education, Newman notes:

The child who speaks when the teacher requests a response is rewarded. The one who ponders is often considered withdrawn, problematic. The educational system appears to favor students who have the immediate answer, not those who take time to consider other questions.¹²³

This attitude toward activity contrasts with that fostered by the Taoist tradition, where the individual is not the active agent; he or she is to remain calm, and truth eventually will make itself apparent. Imagine members of these two cultures occupying the same classroom. African Americans are also a doing culture. Emotional vitality, activity, openness of feelings, and being expressive, which are part of the African-American experience, all involve forms of doing.¹²⁴

HALL'S HIGH-CONTEXT AND LOW-CONTEXT ORIENTATIONS

The anthropologist Edward Hall offers us another effective means of examining cultural similarities and differences in both perception and communication. He categorizes cultures as being either high- or low-context, depending on the degree to which meaning comes from the setting rather than from the words being exchanged.¹²⁵ The assumption underlying Hall's classifications is that “one of the functions of culture is to provide a highly selective screen between man and the outside world. In its many forms, culture therefore designates what we pay attention to and what we ignore.”¹²⁶

For Hall, *context* was “the information that surrounds an event; it is inextricably bound up with the meaning of the event.”¹²⁷ His work revealed that cultures were often characterized by high- or low-context communication, which could be described in the following manner:

A high context (HC) communication or message is one in which most of the information is already in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicitly transmitted part of the message. A low context (LC) communication is just the opposite; i.e., the mass of the information is vested in the explicit code.¹²⁸

Although all cultures contain some characteristics of both high- and low-context variables, most can be placed along a scale showing their ranking on this particular dimension (see Table 5.6). To emphasize this fact, we have placed various cultures on a continuum rather than using only two rigid categories.

High Context

In high-context cultures (American Indian, Latin American, Japanese, Arab, Chinese, African American, and Korean), many of the meanings being exchanged during the encounter do not have to be communicated through words. One reason that meanings

TABLE 5.6 Cultures Arranged Along the High-Context and Low-Context Dimension

HIGH-CONTEXT CULTURES
Japanese
Chinese
Korean
African American
Native American
Arab
Greek
Latin
Italian
English
French
North American
Scandinavian
German
German/Swiss
LOW-CONTEXT CULTURES

Source: Based on the work of Edward T. Hall. E.T. Hall, *Beyond Culture* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976), 91.

often do not have to be stated verbally in high-context cultures is that the people are very homogeneous. They have similar experiences and information networks, and well-established social protocols. High-context cultures, because of tradition and history, change very little over time. According to Hofstede, high-context cultures are "more often found in traditional cultures."¹²⁹ These are cultures in which consistent messages have produced consistent responses to the social environment. "As a result," the Halls say, "for most normal transactions in daily life they do not require, nor do they expect, much in-depth background information."¹³⁰ Because meaning is not necessarily contained in words, in high-context cultures, information is provided through inference, gestures, and even silence.

People from high-context cultures tend to be aware of their surroundings and can express and interpret feelings without verbally stating them. Andersen points out,

"High-context cultures are more reliant on and tuned in to nonverbal communication."¹³¹ Meaning in high-context cultures is also conveyed "through status (age, sex, education, family background, title, and affiliations) and through an individual's informal friends and associates."¹³² Because of the subtle "messages" used by high-context cultures, members of these groups, according to Gudykunst, often "communicate in an indirect fashion."¹³³ They rely more on *how* something is said, rather than *what* is said, and are acutely aware of nonverbal cues.

Low Context

In low-context cultures (German, Swiss, Scandinavian, and North American), the population is less homogeneous and therefore tends to compartmentalize interpersonal contacts. This lack of a large pool of common experiences means that "each time they interact with others they need detailed background information."¹³⁴ In low-context cultures, the verbal message contains most of the information and very little is embedded in the context or the participants. This characteristic manifests itself in a host of ways. For example, the Asian mode of communication (high context) is often vague, indirect, and implicit, whereas Western communication (low context) tends to be direct and explicit. In addition, as Lynch notes, "Low-context communicators talk more, speak more rapidly, and often raise their voices."¹³⁵ Althen offers an excellent summary of Americans' fascination with language in the following paragraph:

Americans depend more on spoken words than on nonverbal behavior to convey messages. They think it is important to be able to "speak up" and "say what's on their mind." They admire a person who has a large vocabulary and who can express him- or herself clearly and cleverly.¹³⁶

Differences in perceptions of credibility are yet another aspect of communication associated with these two orientations. In high-context cultures, people who rely primarily on verbal messages for information are perceived as less credible. They believe that silence often sends a better message than words, and that anyone who needs words does not have the information. As the Indonesian proverb states, "Empty cans clatter the loudest." Ting-Toomey has observed that the communication differences between high-context and low-context cultures are also apparent in the manner in which each approaches conflict. For example, because high-context cultures tend to be less open, they consider conflict harmful to most communication encounters. For them, Ting-Toomey says, "Conflict should be dealt with discreetly and subtly."¹³⁷

FACE AND FACEWORK

Our last cultural pattern is called "face" and "facework." Here we are using the term *face* as a metaphor for the self-image you want to project to other people. Since it is how you want others to see you, it is a product of social interaction and, as such, can be either lost or gained.¹³⁸ *Facework* is the construction and communication of face. In other words, facework comprises the various actions you engage in to acquire face for yourself or give face to someone else. For a job interview, you will probably wear your best dress or suit and be sure to arrive a few minutes before the scheduled time. During the interview, you will remember to sit erect, maintain eye contact, respond to questions with

thoughtful answers, use more formal terms of address, and avoid slang. These efforts amount to self-directed facework because you want to make a positive impression on the personnel manager. As the old adage goes, you will "put on your best face." Complimenting a friend on being promoted at work or for achieving a new personal best time in a bicycle race is an example of other-directed facework.

Ting-Toomey has conducted extensive research into the role of face and facework in intercultural communication, especially in conflict situations. Her work assumes that people from all cultures strive to "maintain and negotiate face in all communication situations."¹³⁹ Face and facework, however, are influenced by cultural values and vary from one culture to the next.¹⁴⁰ In individualistic cultures, for example, people are more concerned with maintaining their own face. Stewart and Bennett tell us that in the United States, "Self-definition is determined primarily by personal achievement."¹⁴¹ This means that a person's face is usually derived from his or her own self-effort and is normally independent of others. Since U.S. Americans do not normally rely on group affiliation for their identity or social support, they are less concerned with how they influence someone else's face. This produces a rather direct, forthright communication style. Common expressions in the United States such as "don't beat around the bush," "tell it like it is," "tell me what you really think," and "don't hold anything back" demonstrate the value placed on open, candid communication. In some instances, positive interpersonal relations may take a back seat to frankness. Gudykunst and Nishida tell us that "North Americans see threats to their credibility or self-image as face threats," and actual loss of face is a result of personal failure.¹⁴²

In collectivistic cultures, group membership is normally the primary source of identity and status. Considerable value is placed on establishing and sustaining stable, harmonious relationships with members of these in-groups. This is evident in what constitutes face in collectivistic societies. For the Japanese, face involves "honor, appearance of propriety, presence, and the impact on others."¹⁴³ Among the Chinese, according to Gao and Ting-Toomey, "gaining and losing face is connected closely with issues of social pride, honor, dignity, insult, shame, disgrace, humility, trust, mistrust, respect, and prestige."¹⁴⁴ As you would suspect, extreme politeness is also part of face-saving in that being rude or disrespectful would cause the other person to feel shame and experience a lack of pride.

These varying attitudes as to what represents face have a very noticeable impact on how a culture views and approaches conflict. Kim tells us that in collective cultures in-group conflict "is viewed as damaging to social face and relational harmony, so it should be avoided as much as possible."¹⁴⁵ As a result, in collectivistic cultures maintenance of mutual and other-face receives greater emphasis than self-face. In Japan, for instance, an individual's actions that discredit or bring shame to other in-group members or disturb smooth interpersonal relations will result in a loss of face.¹⁴⁶

The different values placed on face, what constitutes face, and how it is managed have a very noticeable influence on facework. Drawing on the individualism/collectivism cultural pattern, Ting-Toomey posits that when confronted with the potential for conflict, collectivists will be more inclined toward avoidance and obligating measures.¹⁴⁷ This is a result of concern for both mutual face and others' face, and how one's actions may affect others. March illustrates this concern for other-face when he relates that a widespread practice in Japan is to pay the bill without first checking it. To examine the bill would create a loss of face for the store personnel and the store itself.¹⁴⁸ Individualists, however, are concerned primarily with self-face and tend to favor confrontational

and solution-oriented approaches to resolve conflicts.¹⁴⁹ In the United States, therefore, it is quite common to closely examine a bill before paying it.

These contrasting attitudes toward conflict produce quite different culturally based communication styles. During intercultural communication events, these contrasting styles can produce confusion, misinterpretation, or even animosity among the participants. Adherence to an indirect communication style (such as in high-context cultures) in order to sustain amicable relations can actually produce the opposite effect among individualistic participants. Conversely, the use of open, direct, forthright communication (such as in low-context cultures) can be perceived as rude and inconsiderate by collectivistic participants, who will consider the interaction as face threatening.

The differences between face and facework across cultures are a function of different cultural values. Just as we have discussed throughout this chapter, the variation in cultural values has a direct and continuing influence on how you perceive the world, behave, and communicate. As we conclude this chapter, we urge you to learn more about variations in cultural patterns so that you will be able to understand, predict, and even adapt to the behavior of people from cultures different from your own.

SUMMARY

- Culture and communication are so intertwined that it is easy to conceive of culture as communication and communication as culture.
- Culture seeks to tell its members what to expect from life, and thereby reduces confusion and helps predict the future.
- The basic elements of culture are history, religion, values, social organizations, and language.
- Culture is shared, learned behavior that promotes individual and social survival, adaptation, and growth and development.
- Culture most directly affects communication because culture is (1) learned, (2) transmitted from generation to generation, (3) based on symbols, (4) dynamic, and (5) an integrated process.
- Perception is best defined as “the process of selecting, organizing, and interpreting sensory data in a way that enables us to make sense of our world.”
- Perception is the primary mechanism by which you develop your worldview.
- Beliefs are one’s convictions about the truth of something—with or without proof.
- Values are enduring attitudes about the preferability of one belief over another.
- Cultural pattern taxonomies are used to illustrate the dominant beliefs and values of a culture.
- Dominant American cultural patterns include individualism, equal opportunity, material acquisition, science and technology, progress and change, work and play, and competitive nature.

- A prominent taxonomy of diverse culture patterns that explains both perceptual and communication differences is Hofstede's Values Dimension, which includes (1) individualism and collectivism, (2) uncertainty avoidance, (3) power distance, (4) masculinity and femininity, and (5) long-term and short-term orientation.
- The Kluckhohn, Kluckhohn, and Strodtbeck Value Orientation taxonomy includes (1) human nature, (2) the perception of nature, (3) time, (4) activity, and (5) relationships.
- In Hall's Context Orientation, *high context* and *low context* describe the degree to which individuals rely on internalized information.
- For Ting-Toomey, face and facework take different forms and are valued differently across cultures. Face is a function of group affiliation in collectivistic cultures and is self-derived in individualistic cultures. In conflict situations, collectivistic cultures focus on other-face and mutual face, while individualistic cultures focus on self-face.

ACTIVITIES

1. In small groups, list the American cultural values mentioned in this chapter. Try to think of other values that are not included in the text. Then find examples from American advertising campaigns that illustrate these values. For example, the advertising slogan from an athletic-shoe manufacturer, "Just do it," reflects the American value of accomplishment.
2. Working with others in a small group and using Hofstede's value dimensions, make a list of behaviors found in American culture that reflect individualism, uncertainty avoidance, and femininity.
3. Working in a small group, make a list of typical American behaviors that relate to evil, good and evil, and good. How widespread are these behaviors within the culture?
4. Examine your behavior and determine how well you fit into the various degrees of time orientation.
5. Think about a recent conflict situation in which you participated (e.g., an argument with your significant other, your parents, or a stranger). What communication strategies did you use to give, maintain, or take face?

DISCUSSION IDEAS

1. How does learning about one's culture help in understanding other cultures?
2. What differences in behavior are exhibited by people who come from cultures that have different activity orientations?
3. Examine the concept of high- and low-context cultures. What problems can you anticipate when you are communicating with someone who holds a different context orientation?
4. How does cultural diversity in social perception affect the intercultural communication process?
5. What cultural values help explain why face is more important in Asian societies than in the United States?