C H A P T E R   2

The Cultural Context

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to

1. recognize that cultures are dynamic, fluid, and not static entities;

2. compare and contrast individualism and collectivism;

3. identify some cultures that are individualistic and some that are collectivistic;

4. recognize that no culture is purely individualistic or purely collectivistic;

5. compare and contrast high- and low-context cultures;

6. identify some cultures that are high context and some that are low context;

7. compare value orientations among cultures;

8. compare and contrast large and small power distance cultures;

9. identify some cultures that are large power distance and some that are small power distance;

10. compare and contrast large and small uncertainty avoidant cultures;

11. identify some cultures that are weak uncertainty avoidant and some that are strong uncertainty avoidant; and

12. assess your degree of individualism/collectivism, vertical and horizontal individualism/collectivism, high/low context, and power distance.

Cultural Context

Culture hides more than it reveals, and strangely enough what it hides, it hides most effectively from its own participants.

—Edward T. Hall[1]

The cultural context in which human communication occurs is perhaps the most defining influence on human interaction. Culture provides the overall framework wherein humans learn to organize their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors in relation to their environment. Although people are born into a culture, it is not innate. Culture is learned. Culture teaches one how to *think,* conditions one how to *feel,* and instructs one how to *act,* especially how to *interact* with others—in other words, how to communicate. In many respects, the terms *communication* and *culture* can be used interchangeably. Yet the influence of culture on human interaction is paradoxical. As we conduct our daily lives, most of us are unaware of our culture; however, culture influences our every thought, feeling, and action. As the late internationally recognized anthropologist Edward Hall asserts in the quote at the beginning of this chapter, culture hides more than it reveals, particularly from its own members. Australian anthropologist Roger Keesing argues that culture provides people with an implicit theory about how to behave and how to interpret the behavior of others. People from different cultures learn different implicit theories. These theories are learned through socialization. And through socialization, individuals also learn the dominant values of their particular culture and their self-identities.[2]

We often think of a culture in terms of its geography; for example, we think of Saudi Arabia as a hot, desert culture and of Siberia as a cold, mountainous one. But culture is more a human phenomenon than a geographic one. And while geography certainly affects how people live within a particular culture, it is the people, more than the geography, that constitute culture. So when you think of a culture, think about the people. That being said, it is also important to understand that cultures of people are not static but, rather, dynamic. This means that cultures change; they are fluid, always moving. For example, a dramatic change we have seen in China is the implementation of the one-child policy, which was established in 1979 to limit that country's population explosion (recall from Chapter 1 that China has 1.3 billion people). Although originally intended to be a temporary measure, the policy limiting couples to one child each continues today. Fines, taxes, forced abortions, and sterilization may result if a couple violates the policy. This policy has dramatically changed China's culture; to be sure, it is thought to have reduced the population growth by as many as 300 million people since its inception. To provide some perspective on that change, there are about 310 million people in the United States.[3]

Over the past few decades, anthropologists, communication researchers, psychologists, and sociologists have isolated several dimensions of cultural variability that can be used to differentiate cultures. This chapter will focus on five dimensions of cultural variability: individualism–collectivism, high–low context, value orientations, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance. Each of these dimensions affects how people communicate.

The five dimensions of cultural variability will be presented along cultural continua:

Low [_____] High

The cultural continua allow us to represent the dimensions of cultural variability as continuous and varying in magnitude by degree. In other words, no culture is purely and absolutely individualistic or collectivistic. Instead, a culture may be more individualistic or more collectivistic than some other culture. Another important point to make is that these cultural dimensions of variability are not opposites; that is, a culture where a large power distance is practiced should not be thought of as the opposite of a culture where small power distance is practiced. In some cases, dimensions of cultural variability may coexist in cultures. In addition, as mentioned above, cultures are not static or fixed in time; many cultures are in a state of great transition. Thus, a culture that was once considered collectivistic may now be considered individualistic. For example, Japan is considered a collectivistic, group-oriented society. However, since the 1950s, Japan has been strongly influenced by Western culture. Many Japanese scholars have observed that the younger generation of Japanese, while still considered collectivistic, is more individualistic than their parents and especially their grandparents. Likewise, although the United States is considered very individualistic, many U.S. businesses and corporations employ collectivistic management models in the workplace, focusing on teamwork and cooperation.

Finally, and this is an important point, when we label a culture as individualistic—or large power distance and so forth—that does not mean that every person in that culture is an individualist. The United States, for example, is considered an individualistic culture, yet groups within the United States are collectivistic. While reading through this chapter, remember that cultures are not static. Cultures are dynamic, continuously developing and evolving.

INDIVIDUALISM–COLLECTIVISM

Perhaps the single most studied dimension of cultural variability used to compare and contrast cultures and microcultures is individualism–collectivism (see Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1   Individualism–Collectivism

Individualism ←————————→ Collectivism

Cultures falling on one side of the continuum are individualistic, while those falling toward the other side are collectivistic. Cultures falling at the midpoint might possess both individualistic and collectivistic characteristics. Gayle and Knutson write that Norwegians, for example, possess both individualistic and collectivistic tendencies. Norwegians are taught to put the needs of society above their own and to embrace a classless society. Simultaneously, however, Norwegians value personal independence. While they conform to social norms, the individual Norwegian rebuffs traditional rules and standards. They strive for independence yet do not depend on others to recognize their individual achievements. They believe that they must recognize their own good qualities in order to gain self-esteem.[4]

Perhaps Norway is unusual in that its people carry collectivistic and individualistic tendencies, but regardless of culture, most persons carry both individualistic and collectivistic tendencies to some degree. The difference is that in some cultures individualistic tendencies dominate while in others collectivistic tendencies dominate.[5]

Individualism

Researchers at the University of Michigan recently analyzed more than 250 studies that investigated individualism, collectivism, or both.[6] They found that the most relevant feature of **individualism**, as defined in the majority of the studies they reviewed, was valuing personal independence. Researchers at the University of Auckland in New Zealand point out that valuing personal independence involves putting an emphasis on personal responsibility and freedom of choice, personal autonomy, and achieving self-fulfillment. Moreover, individualists strive to maintain distinctive personal attitudes and opinions and prefer self-directed behavior and independence of groups. Individualists tend to see themselves as unique from others.[7]

Harry Triandis, from the University of Illinois, is well known for his work on individualism and collectivism. Triandis discusses four defining attributes of individualism–collectivism:

1. How individuals perceive themselves (e.g., "I am distinct and unique" vs. "I am a member of a family, tribe")

2. How individuals relate to others (e.g., "How/what do I gain from this act?" vs. "How will this act affect others?")

3. The goals they follow (e.g., "I want to win" vs. "I'm a team player to help the group win")

4. What drives their behavior (e.g., "It is my right to do this" vs. "My duty is to my group")

Triandis writes that in individualistic cultures, emphasis is placed on individuals' goals over group goals. Social behavior is guided by personal goals, perhaps at the expense of other types of goals. Individualistic cultures stress values that benefit the individual person. The self is promoted because each person is viewed as uniquely endowed and possessing distinctive talent and potential. Individuals are encouraged to pursue and develop their abilities and aptitudes. In many individualistic cultures, people are taught to be creative, self-reliant, and assertive.[8]

Triandis and others have pointed out that an important ingredient of individualistic cultures is that the individual is emotionally disconnected from in-groups such as the family. Because the individual has been taught to be independent, social control depends more on personal guilt than on shame or other social norms or conformity. Ironically, members of individualistic cultures tend to belong to many groups, but their affiliation with them is short-lived. Many of the groups to which an individualist belongs are designed to enhance self-worth. Such groups might include self-help groups, therapy groups, or occupational groups.[9]

The origins of individualism have been traced to ancient Greece, where literature (e.g., *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*) celebrates the accomplishments of individuals. Oyserman, Coon, and Kemmelmeier point out that the term *individualism* may have its roots in the French Revolution (1789–1799), where the word was used to describe the negative influence of individual rights on the well-being of the French commonwealth.[10] Triandis also notes that ecology (i.e., features of geography, resources, and the history of a society) can shape the level of individualism in a culture. For example, modern, industrial-urban, fast-changing cultures tend to be individualistic.

In many cases, individualistic cultures are highly complex and affluent. Complex cultures have heterogeneous populations and economies based on occupational specialization, where individuals do different jobs. Cultural complexity also occurs in cultures where people are separated from one another either geographically or through migration patterns. Many individualistic cultures have a history of colonization, for example.[11]

Collectivism

Oyserman, Coon, and Kemmelmeier point out that the central ingredient of **collectivism** is the assumption that groups bind and mutually obligate individuals.[12] In their extensive review of literature, they found that collectivism is linked to a sense of duty to group, interdependence, harmony, and working with the group. Triandis asserts that in collectivistic societies, group goals take precedence over individual goals. Collectivistic cultures stress values that serve the in-group by subordinating personal goals for the sake of preserving the in-group. Collectivistic societies are characterized by extended primary groups such as the family, neighborhood, or occupational group in which members have diffuse mutual obligations and expectations based on their status or rank. In collectivistic cultures, people are not seen as isolated individuals. People see themselves as interdependent with others (e.g., their in-group), where responsibility is shared and accountability is collective. A person's identity is defined by his or her group memberships.[13]

Triandis points out that while collectivistic cultures stress the importance of the group over the individual, their members tend to belong to fewer groups than do persons in individualistic cultures. Unlike the individualist, the collectivist is emotionally connected to

the in-group. A collectivist's values and beliefs are consistent with and reflect those of the in-group. Moreover, a collectivist's association with his or her in-groups may last a lifetime. In many collectivistic cultures, the primary value is harmony with others. Triandis observes that because group harmony is so highly valued, obedience to and compliance with in-group pressures is routine. One's behavior is role based, and deviations from the prescribed role are discouraged and often negatively sanctioned. In this sense, a person's behavior is guided more by shame than by personal guilt. A collectivist who stands out from the group disrupts the harmony and may be punished. Most collectivistic cultures value social reciprocity, obligation, dependence, and obedience. But by far, the primary value stressed by many collectivistic cultures is harmony.[14]

STUDENT VOICES ACROSS CULTURES

Personal Understanding of Collectivism in China

My name is Pengfei Song, and I'm a 25-year old guy from China. I was raised in Qiqihaer, a city located in the northeast part of the country. Before I came to the United States to get my bachelor's degree, I had received my education in China from kindergarten through the first 2 years in university.

As far as I can recall, the idea of collectivism has been introduced to me since I was in elementary school. I was told that serving your country and people should be your priority regardless of what you want to do in the future. The reason is that we, as Chinese, believe that individuals, to a large extent, cannot have a peaceful life without the prosperity of our nation. Put in another way, our nation is defined as the big family, whereas each household is a small family within this big family. As a result, it is very common to see the Chinese people emphasize group goals over individual goals and think more in terms of "we."

Dating back to the sports meeting in my high school, I remember that I signed up to compete in the 200-meter race with other students from other classes in my grade. I decided to do it not because I had the ability to be the winner but because my class needed someone to represent it and I wanted to be that person for my class. To me, the reputation of my class meant more than anything. I could feel that I was not myself. I stood for all my classmates. So if I failed, my class failed. Fortunately, I won the competition eventually, which meant victory for the whole class. Therefore, the repute apparently belonged to my class, not to myself.

Individualism Versus Collectivism?

Although they sound as though they're opposite dimensions of cultural variability, individualism and collectivism are not mutually exclusive; that is, they can coexist within a person of any culture. Green, Deschamps, and Páez point out that the degree of individualism or collectivism within someone may be triggered by the social context and one's social relations. They suggest that individuals can be characterized by specific combinations of individualistic and collectivistic tendencies. For example, a person may find that individualistic relations are motivated in particular situations, such as in business relationships, whereas

with family members, the relationship is collectivistic.[15] To be sure, Hui has shown variation in individualistic and collectivistic attitudes in different types of relationships, such as with one's spouse, parent, neighbor, or coworker.[16]

Competitiveness often has been associated with individualism. Instruments that measure individualism often include items that tap into one's competitive nature (e.g., "It's important to me that I win"). Recent research suggests that competitiveness is not a necessary feature of individualism, however. In their research, Oyserman, Coon, and Kemmelmeier found that Americans generally score higher in individualism than do Japanese. But when competitiveness is included in the measurement of individualism, the difference between Americans and Japanese disappears (i.e., they score the same on measures of individualism).[17] Green, Deschamps, and Páez note that, in any culture, people compete for scarce resources in economically adverse contexts and that scarcity triggers competitiveness, which leads to active individualism aimed at achieving economic success and material well-being. In contexts of affluence, in contrast, other individualistic values such as individual freedom, personal development, quality of life, and relational interdependence become salient.[18] In a Taiwanese sample, Yu and Yang found that achievement motivation as a form of competitiveness can be driven by individual or collective concerns. These findings support the idea that competitiveness is associated with individualism as well as with collectivism.[19]

So, Who's an Individualist and Who's a Collectivist?

Because there can be considerable within-country variation, labeling a particular country or culture as individualistic or collectivistic is difficult and may lead to overgeneralizations. However, in their landmark analysis of more than 250 research articles on individualism and collectivism, Oyserman and her colleagues were able to draw some conclusions.[20] The central focus of the Oyserman study was to answer the question, Are Americans (i.e., European Americans) more individualistic and less collectivistic than others groups? In general, the answer was yes, Americans are more individualistic and less collectivistic than other groups. In comparison with nearly 50 other countries, European Americans were more individualistic than all but 12. European Americans were generally lower in collectivism as well. There were exceptions, though; Americans were higher in collectivism than were people in New Zealand, France, Singapore, Tanzania, Egypt, Costa Rica, and Venezuela. Oyserman notes that one of the most remarkable findings was that Americans were slightly more collectivistic than Japanese and no difference was observed between Americans and Koreans on collectivistic measures.

However, in her recent research, Toshi Imada found that the stories in American textbooks highlighted themes of individualism such as self-direction and achievement, whereas Japanese stories highlighted themes of collectivism, such as conformity and group harmony. Her study also found cultural differences in story characteristics (e.g., the narrator, attribution of the outcome, picture content) that are related to individualism and collectivism.[21] Oyserman has pointed out that although as a group East Asians were simultaneously lower in individualism and higher in collectivism than were Americans, there was notable variety within East Asian countries regarding individualism and collectivism. For example, Chinese were highest in collectivism but lowest in individualism, whereas Japanese were highest in individualism but lowest in collectivism. South Koreans were between Chinese and Japanese on these measures. This may be because South Korean culture has unique features that

distinguish it from traditional Confucian-based collectivistic cultures—that is, a strong emphasis on family. In a more recent study, Fischer and a number of his colleagues examined 11 countries and found that among these countries, the United States ranked highest in overall individualism.[22]

Overall Individualism

1. United States
2. Germany
3. India
4. Lebanon
5. New Zealand
6. Peru
7. Brazil
8. Taiwan
9. Saudi Arabia
10. United Kingdom
11. Argentina

Individualism and collectivism also have been studied among Middle Eastern and African cultures. Sagy, Orr, Bar-On, and Awwad found that both Israeli-Jewish and Palestinian-Arab groups were more collectivistic than individualistic. However, the Palestinians scored higher than the Israeli group on items measuring and emphasizing an in-group collectivistic orientation (e.g., my nationality, my country). Pirttilä-Backman, Kassea, and Ikonen found that Cameroonians were shown to be more collectivistic than individualistic. They also found that Cameroonian women were more individualistic than were the men. Cameroon provides an interesting context for the study of individualism and collectivism because of the vast ethnic differences there. For example, although the country is officially bilingual—with about 20% speaking English and the rest speaking French—more than 200 languages are spoken there. Religious diversity abounds as well, with indigenous beliefs held by about 40% of the population, Christian beliefs held by another 40%, and Muslim beliefs by about 20%.[23]

AN INTERCULTURAL CONVERSATION: INDIVIDUALISTIC AND COLLECTIVISTIC CULTURES

To be sure, one's individualistic or collectivistic disposition will affect communication. In the following exchange, Mr. Patterson, an American manager working in Korea, is meeting with his supervisor, Mr. Wyman, who is also American. The United States is considered more

individualistic than Korea. In this scenario, Mr. Patterson reports to Mr. Wyman about some changes he has made within several of his sales teams. Later, Park Young Sam, their Korean counterpart, enters into the dialogue.[24]

Mr. Patterson:	Good morning, Mr. Wyman, thanks for meeting with me this morning. As you know, our division has been doing very well this quarter. In fact, our numbers are up across the board.
Mr. Wyman:	Yes, I've seen your quarterly reports. Nice job!
Mr. Patterson:	Thanks. In order to recognize their hard work, I've made some changes in our sales teams. I've created team leaders in each group. In our product group, I promoted Lee Young-sam. In the marketing group, I promoted Chun Tae-woo, and in the technology group, I promoted Choi Mino. All of them have been real leaders. I think this idea will really motivate them. In fact, I met with the groups individually and announced the promotions.
Mr. Wyman:	Good job, Patterson. I can see you're really on top of things. Good work.

Two Months Later

Mr. Patterson, Mr. Wyman, and Park Young Sam, a Korean manager, are discussing the poor performance of Mr. Patterson's sales teams.

Mr. Wyman:	Well, just look at these dismal results. The numbers for this quarter are way down from last quarter. What's happened?
Mr. Patterson:	I don't know. Ever since I introduced the team leader concept, the groups' productivity has really plummeted. I thought it was a great idea. I guess I chose the wrong people to lead the teams. I'll assign new leaders tomorrow.
Park Young Sam:	Well . . . you may select new leaders if you desire, but the men you chose were all very capable. However, by elevating them, you made them stand out and disrupted the harmony of each group. In Korea, we all work hard for the group . . . not just one person.
Mr. Patterson:	I guess I should have just left things as they were.

Following their individualistic orientations, Mr. Patterson and Mr. Wyman were perfectly comfortable with the idea of appointing team leaders within the individual sales groups. However, as Park Young Sam mentioned, doing so upset the harmony of the groups, which in turn led to poor performance. In the United States, workers are often motivated by the opportunity for promotion and advancement, as this serves the individualistic drive for individual achievement. In less individualistic cultures, however, workers may be motivated by being a part of a cohesive and productive team. Mr. Patterson and Mr. Wyman could have consulted with Mr. Sam prior to making the promotions. He probably would have advised against it.

Patterns of Individualism and Collectivism Across the United States

As mentioned above, although the United States is considered individualistic, considerable regional variation exists. Because of ecological, historical, and institutional practices, the Deep South is the most collectivistic region of the United States. Defeat in the Civil War, the institution of slavery, relative poverty, and the prominence of religion all contribute to the collectivistic tendencies of the South. In addition, the Southwest, having been settled by Mexican and Spanish populations before White settlers entered the area, is also considered fairly collectivistic. Hawaii, too, has a culture different from the rest of the United States, with approximately 65% of its population coming from Asian cultures. Hence, much of the culture has collectivistic characteristics, and Hawaii would be considered collectivistic. On the other hand, the Mountain West and Great Plains is thought to be the most individualistic region in the United States.[25]

In their research, Vandello and Cohen created an index designed to measure collectivism in different regions of the United States. Their index was composed of eight items, including the percentage of people living alone, percentage of elderly people living alone, percentage of households with grandchildren in them, divorce-to-marriage ratio, percentage of people with no religious affiliation, average percentage of those voting Libertarian over the past four presidential elections, ratio of people carpooling to work to people living alone, and percentage of self-employed people. Their index showed a general pattern of relative collectivism in the South, particularly in the former slave states, with maximum individualism in the Great Plains and Mountain West. Montana was the most individualistic state, and Hawaii was the most collectivistic (see Table 2.1).[26]

The point has been made several times now that variations of individualism and collectivism can be seen within any culture. No culture is purely and entirely individualistic or collectivistic. To account for this phenomenon, Triandis and other cross-cultural researchers distinguish between individualism and collectivism at the *cultural* level and idiocentrism and allocentrism at the individual *psychological* level. Many cross-cultural researchers believe that

Table 2.1   The Most Collectivistic States and the Most Individualistic States

Most Collectivistic States	Most Individualistic States
Hawaii	Montana
Louisiana	Oregon
South Carolina	Nebraska
Mississippi	Wyoming
Maryland	South Dakota
Utah	Colorado
Virginia	North Dakota
Georgia	Washington
California	Kansas
New Jersey	Iowa

individualism–collectivism cannot be measured at the cultural level. We should not label entire cultures as individualistic or collectivistic, because persons within those cultures may vary considerably. We can, however, measure an individual degree of individualism–collectivism.

When people carry individualistic tendencies, we call them *idiocentric.* When people carry collectivistic tendencies, we call them *allocentric.* Idiocentrism and allocentrism are the individual equivalents of cultural individualism–collectivism. Allocentrics tend to define themselves with reference to social entities (e.g., families, hometowns) more so than do idiocentrics. Allocentrics internalize the norms of the in-group and enjoy behavior along in-group expectations. Allocentrics are less likely to be lonely than idiocentrics. The self-esteem of allocentrics tends to be based on getting along with others, compared with idiocentrics, whose self-esteem is often based on getting ahead of others.[27]

Communication Consequences of Individualism–Collectivism

A given culture's orientation toward individualism or collectivism has important behavioral consequences for that culture's members. Among collectivists, social behavior is guided by the group. Along with group membership come prescribed duties and obligations. Among individualists, social behavior is guided by one's personal attitudes, motivations, and other internal processes. To be sure, individualistic cultures value and reward an individual's uniqueness. The United States, for example, is replete with contests and ceremonies that recognize individual accomplishment. People are publicly rewarded for being the most beautiful, thinnest, strongest, fastest, tallest, smartest, youngest, oldest, funniest, or the "best" at whatever they aspire to. Collectivistic cultures, on the other hand, stress harmony and cooperation. Collectivists strive for the approval of the in-group, which is accomplished not by standing out but by conforming to the group's norm. From the collectivist's perspective, an individual who stands out from the group disrupts harmony. In the United States, "the squeaky wheel gets the grease," but in Japan, "the tallest nail gets hammered down."[28]

Triandis maintains that a culture's individualistic or collectivistic orientation will likely affect child-rearing practices. In individualistic cultures, child rearing emphasizes independence, exploration, creativity, and self-reliance. Individualistic parents encourage their children to be unique, express themselves, and be independent. The children of individualistic parents understand that they are to leave home once they reach a certain age or education level. In fact, it is thought odd or unusual if children past the age of about 21 still live at home with their parents. Though rank order exists in the individualist's family, decisions are often made democratically. In collectivistic cultures, child rearing emphasizes conformity, obedience, security, and reliability. Collectivistic parents teach their children the importance of family lineage and ancestry. Typically, the father dominates the collectivist's home, where rank in the family is often determined by sex and age.[29]

Collectivists are more conscious of in-group/out-group distinctions than are individualists. According to Gudykunst and his colleagues, individualists tend to initiate and maintain specific friendships based on desirable qualities of the other person. Collectivists form friendships that are determined by their hierarchical role in society. Collectivists perceive and rate their in-group friendships as more intimate than do individualists. On the other hand, individualists tend to apply the same value standards to all, whereas collectivists tend to apply different value standards to members of their in-groups and out-groups. For example, collectivists are

likely to use the equality norm (i.e., equal distribution of resources) with in-group members and the equity norm (i.e., unequal distribution of resources) with out-group members.[30]

Finally, in their exhaustive review of studies, Oyserman, Coon, and Kemmelmeier summarized behavioral traits that have been shown to be associated with individualism and collectivism (Table 2.2).[31]

Measuring Individualism–Collectivism

Over the past decades, cross-cultural researchers have spent considerable effort developing instruments designed to measure one's relative degree of individualism and collectivism. Researchers at the University of Auckland in New Zealand recently developed the Auckland Individualism and Collectivism Scale.[32] (See Self-Assessment 2.1.)

Vertical and Horizontal Individualism and Collectivism

While it is clear that individualistic cultures differ from collectivistic cultures, individualistic cultures can, and do, differ from other individualistic cultures. The same can be said of collectivistic cultures. Some individualistic cultures, for example, link self-reliance with competition, while other individualistic cultures do not. Some collectivistic cultures emphasize in-group harmony above all else, while other collectivistic cultures do not. To account for some of these finer distinctions among individualistic and collectivistic cultures, Triandis and his colleagues differentiate between vertical and horizontal individualism and collectivism.

According to Singelis, Triandis, Bhawuk, and Gelfand, horizontal individualism is a cultural orientation where an autonomous self is valued but the individual is more or less equal in status to others. The self is perceived as independent but nevertheless the same as others. Vertical individualism is the cultural orientation where an autonomous self is also valued but

Table 2.2 Behavioral Traits Associated With Individualism and Collectivism

Individualism	Collectivism
Optimism	Social self-concept
High self-esteem	Need for affiliation
Lower social anxiety	Sensitivity to rejection
Emotional expression	Sensitivity to embarrassment
Satisfaction with self	In-group relationship preferences
Satisfaction with freedom	Indirect communication style
Ease of interacting with strangers	Valuing of social networks
Direct communication style	
Lower relational commitment	
Preference to work alone	

Self-Assessment 2.1

Individualism and Collectivism Scale

Directions: Below are 20 statements that may or may not reflect how you act within your relationships with others. For each statement, indicate the *frequency* with which you engage (or not) in the behaviors described.

5 = always, 4 = usually, 3 = sometimes, 2 = rarely, 1 = never

_____ 1. I discuss job or study-related problems with my parents.

_____ 2. I consult my family before making an important decision.

_____ 3. Before taking a major trip, I consult with most members of my family and many friends.

_____ 4. It is important to consult close friends and get their ideas before making a decision.

_____ 5. Even when I strongly disagree with my group members, I avoid an argument.

_____ 6. I hate to disagree with others in my group.

_____ 7. In interacting with superiors, I am always polite.

_____ 8. I sacrifice my self-interest for the benefit of my group.

_____ 9. I define myself as a competitive person.

_____ 10. I enjoy working in situations involving competition with others.

_____ 11. Without competition, it is impossible to have a good society.

_____ 12. Competition is the law of nature.

_____ 13. I consider myself as a unique person, separate from others.

_____ 14. I enjoy being unique and different from others.

_____ 15. I see myself as "my own person."

_____ 16. It is important for me to act as an independent person.

_____ 17. I take responsibility for my own actions.

_____ 18. Being able to take care of myself is a primary concern for me.

_____ 19. I consult with my superior on work-related matters.

_____ 20. I prefer to be self-reliant rather than depend on others.

Scoring: To compute your *collectivism* score, sum your responses for Items 1 through 8. Your sum must be between 8 and 40. Higher sums (e.g., > 30) indicate a prevalence for collectivism. To compute your *individualism* score, sum your responses for Items 9 through 20. Your sum must be between 12 and 60. Higher sums (e.g., > 45) indicate a prevalence for individualism.

the self is seen as different from and perhaps unequal to others. Status and competition are important aspects of this orientation. The United States and France are examples of vertical individualism, whereas Sweden and Austria are examples of horizontal individualism.[33] **Horizontal collectivism** is the cultural orientation where the individual sees the self as a member of an in-group whose members are similar to one another. The self is interdependent and the same as the self of others. Equality is expected and practiced within this orientation. China is probably a good example of horizontal collectivism. Theoretical communism is an example of extreme horizontal collectivism. **Vertical collectivism** is the cultural orientation in which the individual sees the self as an integral part of the in-group but the members are different from one another, some having more status than others. The self is interdependent, and inequality within the group is valued. In this orientation, serving and sacrifice are important. Japan, India, and rural traditional Greece are examples of vertical collectivism.

In a recent comparison of U.S., Thai, and Japanese students on horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism, McCann, Honeycut, and Keaton found significant differences among the three groups and within each group. Regarding horizontal individualism, the U.S. students scored higher than the Japanese, who scored higher than the Thai students. Interestingly, there were no significant differences among the three groups on vertical individualism, where we might have expected the U.S. students to score higher than the other groups. Finally, the Japanese scored higher on horizontal and vertical collectivism than the U.S. and Thai students. Within each culture, the U.S. students scored highest on horizontal individualism, then, in order, horizontal collectivism, vertical collectivism, and

Measuring Horizontal and Vertical Individualism–Collectivism[35]

Consider the following situations. Place a check next to the response that most closely fits how you would act.

1. You and your friends decided spontaneously to go out to dinner at a restaurant. What do you think is the best way to handle the bill?
   A. _____ Split it equally, without regard to who ordered what.
   B. _____ Split it according to how much each person makes.
   C. _____ The group leader pays the bill or decides how to split it.
   D. _____ Compute each person's charge according to what that person ordered.

2. Which of the four books are you more likely to find the most interesting?
   A. _____ How to make friends
   B. _____ How to succeed in business
   C. _____ How to make sure you are meeting your obligations
   D. _____ How to enjoy yourself inexpensively

3. When you buy clothing for a major social event, you would be most satisfied if . . .
   A. _____ your friends like it.
   B. _____ it is so elegant it will dazzle everyone.

    C.   ____ your parents like it.

    D.   ____ you like it.

4. When people ask me about myself, I . . .

    A.   ____ talk about my friends and what we like to do.

    B.   ____ talk about my accomplishments.

    C.   ____ talk about my ancestors and their traditions.

    D.   ____ talk about what makes me unique.

5. Suppose your boy/girlfriend and your parents do not get along very well. What would you do?

    A.   ____Tell my boy/girlfriend that he/she should make a greater effort to "fit in with my family"

    B.   ____ Tell my boy/girlfriend that I need my parents' financial support and he/she should learn to handle them

    C.   ____ Remind my boy/girlfriend that my parents and family are very important to me and he/she should submit to their wishes

    D.   ____ Nothing

6. Suppose you had one word to describe yourself. What would it be?

    A.   ____ Cooperative

    B.   ____ Competitive

    C.   ____ Dutiful

    D.   ____ Unique

7. Happiness is attained by . . .

    A.   ____ linking with a lot of friendly people.

    B.   ____ winning in competition.

    C.   ____ gaining a lot of status in the community.

    D.   ____ keeping one's privacy.

8. You are at a pizza restaurant with a group of friends. How should you decide what kind of pizza to order?

    A.   ____ We select the pizza that most people prefer.

    B.   ____ We order the most extravagant pizza available.

    C.   ____ The leader of the group orders for everyone.

    D.   ____ I order what I like.

Scoring: Indicate the number of times you selected letters A, B, C, and D. The frequency that is the highest represents your general HC, VI, VC, or HI orientation.

    A.   ____ Horizontal Collectivism (HC)

    B.   ____ Vertical Individualism (VI)

    C.   ____ Vertical Collectivism (VC)

    D.   ____ Horizontal Individualism (HI)

vertical individualism. The Japanese students scored highest on horizontal collectivism, virtually the same on vertical collectivism and horizontal individualism, then lowest on vertical individualism. Finally, the Thai students scored highest on horizontal collectivism, then, in order, horizontal individualism, vertical individualism, and vertical collectivism.[34]

There are advantages and disadvantages to being an individualist, just as there are to being a collectivist. Neither approach is "better" than the other; they are simply different orientations. The goal is to recognize and understand the differences, thereby increasing your intercultural competence. To be sure, the individualism–collectivism dimension of cultural variability has been used extensively in describing cultural differences—perhaps too much. Asian cultures, in particular, are often branded as collectivistic. Recently, the individualism–collectivism dichotomy has been the subject of criticism. In her analysis of the Chinese, Hui-Ching Chang argues that by describing cultures as only collectivistic—which focuses on the structure of society—much of the creativity of individual Asian cultures, including very rich histories, has been ignored. As Chang asserts,

> Although it is through the lens of the metaphor "collectivism" that we are allowed to focus on group membership and patterns of relationships in Asian cultures, at the same time, we lose sight of other aspects of delicate cultural reasoning that underlie manifested behavior patterns.[36]

The essence of Chang's argument is that we cannot rely on single metaphorical distinctions such as individualism–collectivism if we really want to accurately describe and ultimately understand other cultures.

THE PANCULTURAL SELF

As mentioned above, in individualistic cultures, emphasis is placed on individual goals over group goals, values that benefit the self are championed, the self is promoted, and individuals are encouraged to pursue and develop their individual abilities and aptitudes. In these cultures, people are taught to be creative, self-reliant, competitive, and assertive. The *individual self* is the most fundamental basis for self-definition. In contrast, in collectivistic cultures, group goals take precedence over individual goals, values that serve the in-group are stressed, and people are not seen as isolated individuals but as interdependent with others. In these cultures, the *collective self* is the most fundamental basis of self-definition.

Yet there is a growing body of literature that suggests that the individual self is pancultural—that is, that the individual self is more fundamental to self-definition across all cultures than is the collective self. In other words, people in all cultures strive to maintain and achieve positive self-regard as a primary motivation. Current research suggests that both individualistic and collectivistic cultures sanction and even endorse self-enhancement, but via different means. Collectivism is just another way to promote the self. For example, in individualistic cultures of the West (i.e., the United States, Canada, Great Britain), it is accepted and tolerated to show off one's success. In Eastern cultures (e.g., Japan, Korea, China), it is accepted and tolerated to expect reciprocity based on seniority. In other words, in both types of cultures,

a person's motivations for behavior and self-definition stem primarily from one's personal identity and an independent sense of self. Moreover, research demonstrates that on self-description tasks, people generate more aspects of their individual self than of their collective self, regardless of their cultural individualism or collectivism. Some researchers have even suggested that social harmony, a primary value among collectivists, often serves as a means through which to accomplish individual goals. Other researchers have argued that collectivism is explainable not in terms of a fundamentally different cognitive organization of the self but because it is advantageous to the self in the long run. Still others maintain that in collectivistic cultures individuals may temporarily sacrifice their self-interest for the group as long as they expect to receive rewards from the group eventually. Finally, in both individualistic and collectivistic cultures, self-enhancement is sanctioned through upward mobility, status seeking, and general promotions of the self. In both types of cultures, people engage in strategic efforts to self-enhance.

Oyama points out that collectivism has long been used to describe Japanese culture. But, as Oyama asserts, Japanese society is changing and Japanese values also have changed, especially since World War II. Oyama argues that the Japanese collectivistic orientation has been decreasing and that many Japanese now have an individualistic orientation. To be sure, collectivism remains as a cultural system in Japan, especially in decision making in companies or government and in cases of company loyalty or village exclusiveness, but such an expression of collectivism is sometimes just a means of achieving an individually oriented goal. In such circumstances, Oyama contends, seeming collectivistic is a false appearance produced by individually oriented people using collectivistic methods for the realization of personal goals. For example, to value hard work in order to get rich or to study hard to make a name for oneself indicates an individual orientation that depends on a social system. People are obedient to the social system as a means to get money or honor. In behavioral terms, obedience to a social system resembles the behavior of persons with a collective orientation, but the real value orientation underlying the behavior is individual. According to Oyama, this means that individualism and collectivism, at least as practiced and valued in Japan, are not so different.[37] As Gaertner, Sedikides, and Graetz note,

> Given a choice, however, most persons would opt to stay home rather than go to war, save their hard-earned money rather than pay taxes, and relax in the company of their favorite music than engage in community volunteer work. At the same time, most persons would cherish the protection of the group when attacked individually, seek the financial support of the group when experiencing individual financial troubles, and call on the aid of the community in times of individual disaster. The individual self is the primary basis for self-definition.[38]

HIGH- AND LOW-CONTEXT COMMUNICATION

Human communication is dependent on the context in which it occurs. In addition to the verbal and nonverbal codes that are exchanged between interactants, the salient features of a communicative context include the cultural, physical, sociorelational, and perceptual environments (see Table 2.3).

Table 2.3   Human communication is dependent on the context in which it occurs.

Contextual Features

Culture (race, language)

Physical environment (office, church)

Sociorelational (superior/subordinate) $\longrightarrow$ **Communication Decisions** $\longrightarrow$ **Message**

Perceptual (attitudes, emotions)   Verbal choices

Nonverbal choices

The cultural context includes, among myriad other variables, such features as individualism and collectivism. The physical environment includes the actual geographical location of the interaction (e.g., office, classroom, bedroom). The sociorelational environment encompasses the relationship between the interactants (e.g., superior/subordinate, teacher/student, husband/wife). The perceptual environment consists of the attitudes, motivations, and cognitive dispositions of the interactants. Each of these environments provides a wealth of information to the interactants about how to communicate. Here's the important point: *The degree to which interactants focus on these contexts while communicating varies considerably from culture to culture.*

Depending on contextual features present during communication, some persons choose to focus more on the verbal codes than on the nonverbal elements while others actively monitor the nonverbal elements of the context. Edward Hall describes the former as low context and the latter as high context. Hall asserts that

a high-context (HC) communication or message is one in which most of the information is either in the physical context or is internalized in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message. A low-context (LC) communication is just the opposite; i.e., the mass of information is vested in the explicit code.[39]

Like individualism and collectivism, high–low context is best conceptualized along a cultural continuum (see Figure 2.2). No culture exists exclusively on one end of the continuum.

Figure 2.2   High- and Low-Context Continuum

Low Context $\longleftarrow\!\!\!\longrightarrow$ High Context

Characteristics of High- and Low-Context Cultures

Hall argues that the environmental, sociorelational, and perceptual contexts have an immense impact on communication. High-context cultures generally have restricted code

systems. Users of a restricted code system rely more on the contextual elements of the communication setting for information than on the actual language code. In restricted-code cultures, communication is not general across individuals in content but is specific to particular people, places, and times. Within a **high-context** transaction, the interactant will look to the physical, sociorelational, and perceptual environment for information. Of particular importance is the social relationship between the interactants, especially their status. As Hall notes,

> Twins who have grown up together can and do communicate more economically (HC) than two lawyers in a courtroom during a trial (LC), a mathematician programming a computer, two politicians drafting legislation, two administrators writing a regulation, or a child trying to explain to his mother why he got into a fight.[40]

Because interactants in a high-context culture know and understand each other and their appropriate role, words are not necessary to convey meaning. One acts according to one's role. Words and sentences may be collapsed and shortened. In this sense, restricted codes are not unlike local dialects, vernacular, or even jargon used by a well-defined group. Users of restricted codes interpret messages based on their accumulation of shared experiences and expectations.

Hall contends that persons communicating in high-context cultures understand that information from the physical, sociorelational, and perceptual environment already exists and need not be codified verbally. Therefore, high-context communication is fast, proficient, and gratifying. Unlike low-context communication, the burden of understanding in high-context communication rests with each interactant. The rules for communication are implicit, and communicators are expected to know and understand unspoken communication. High-context communication involves using and interpreting messages that are not explicit, minimizing the content of verbal messages, and being sensitive to the social roles of others. Although there are exceptions, many high-context cultures have collectivistic tendencies, including China, Japan, North and South Korea, Vietnam, and many Arab and African cultures.[41]

According to Hall, in a **low-context** transaction, the verbal code is the primary source of information. Low-context cultures generally rely on elaborated codes. Unlike users of restricted codes, users of elaborated codes rely extensively on the verbal code system for creating and interpreting meaning. Information to be shared with others is coded in the verbal message. Although persons in low-context transactions recognize the nonverbal environment, they tend to focus more on the verbal context. Moreover, the rules and expectations are explicitly outlined. Users of elaborated codes are dependent on words to convey meaning and may become uncomfortable with silence. In low-context transactions, the communicants feel a need to speak. People using low-context communication are expected to communicate in ways that are consistent with their feelings. Hence, low-context communication typically involves transmitting direct, explicit messages. Although there are exceptions, many low-context cultures are individualistic, including Switzerland, Germany, Scandinavia, the United States, France, and the United Kingdom.[42]

Communication Consequences of Low- and High-Context Cultural Orientations

Members of high- and low-context cultures communicate differently, especially with the use of silence. Charles Braithwaite argues that one of the fundamental components of cultural and linguistic competence is knowing how and when to use silence as a communicative tactic.[43] During a high-context communicative exchange, the interactants generally are content with silence because they do not rely on verbal communication as their main source of information. Silence, in fact, communicates mutual understanding. Much of the meaning in communication is expected to be interpreted by the receiver. In communicative exchanges between persons of differing status, the person with lower status may recognize the higher status of the other through silence. Steven Pratt and Lawrence Weider contend that many Native American tribes use silence as a way of recognizing "Indianness." A "real" Indian recognizes another real Indian with silence rather than speech. A recognizable Indian knows that neither he nor the others has an obligation to speak and that silence on the part of all conversants is permissible.[44] In her book on the contemporary Japanese woman, Sumiko Iwao writes that most Japanese feel that expressing especially personal or intimate details is best done nonverbally or intuitively—that is, without words. Iwao writes,

> There is an unspoken belief among the Japanese in general that putting deep feelings into words somehow lowers or spoils their value and that understanding attained without words is more precious than that attained through precise articulation.[45]

Unlike in high-context communication, during most low-context transactions, silence is uncomfortable. Persons who do not talk are often perceived negatively. When someone is quiet in a low-context transaction, others may suspect that something is amiss. Silence somehow communicates a problem. Low-context communicators are expected to be direct and to say what they think. Persons in low-context cultures typically separate the issue of communication from the person with whom they are interacting. A manager might say to an employee, "Don't take it personally," as he or she reprimands the person. High-context cultures, on the other hand, tend to see the topic of communication as intrinsic to the person. A person is seen as a role. If the issue is attacked, so is the person. This results in low-context cultures that deliver a direct style of communication, whereas a high-context person prefers indirectness typified by extreme politeness and discretion.

AN INTERCULTURAL CONVERSATION: HIGH- AND LOW-CONTEXT CULTURES

In the following exchange, Mr. Hutchinson is the head of Information Technology within his organization. Mr. Wong is lead computer programmer. Mr. Wong was born and raised in Malaysia, a high-context culture. The two are discussing when Mr. Wong will put a computer

program into production. Note that Mr. Hutchinson's speech is direct and to the point while Mr. Wong's is indirect and subtle. In simple frequency, Mr. Hutchinson uses four times as many words as Mr. Wong.[46]

Mr. Hutchinson:	The program looks good and passed the test run with only minor errors. When do you think you can put it into production? I don't see any production schedule here. The changes need to go into the system by the end of the month. Is that possible? When do you want to go with this?
Mr. Wong:	Maybe I should review the requirements.
Mr. Hutchinson:	The errors were minor. Quality Control needs to know when it will go into production. Let's set the production date now. Just tell me when you'll fix the errors. I'll tell QC.
Mr. Wong:	Perhaps I can e-mail you an estimate. I'll talk to the team.
Mr. Hutchinson:	Couldn't you just tell me when you'll have them fixed? Here, it's no big deal. (Hands Mr. Wong the program) Don't they seem like easy fixes?
Mr. Wong:	(Looks at the program but says nothing—as if not hearing Mr. Hutchinson's suggestion)
Mr. Hutchinson:	Mr. Wong? Just give me a date.
Mr. Wong:	Yes. Whenever you prefer is fine. (Hands the program back to Mr. Hutchinson)
Mr. Hutchinson:	I don't need this. (Hands it back to Mr. Wong) Well, it's got to go in by the first of next month. OK?
Mr. Wong:	Yes, that is fine.

In the above dialogue, Mr. Hutchinson misses the hint that Mr. Wong is unable to set a production date. When Mr. Wong indicates that setting a date is difficult and will require some expertise, he is indirectly telling Mr. Hutchinson that he is not in a position to make the decision on his own and would prefer to discuss it with the team. Mr. Wong further signals his discomfort by telling Mr. Hutchinson that he could e-mail him the date.

Mr. Hutchinson ignores Mr. Wong's status in the organization and further complicates the issue by handing Mr. Wong the program. Trying to avoid any disagreement, Mr. Wong simply asks Mr. Hutchinson to set the date for production and agrees to whatever he says.

Assessing High- and Low-Context Communication

Communication researcher William Gudykunst and his colleagues have developed a survey designed to measure low- and high-context communication styles. The instrument that follows is an adaptation of Gudykunst's scale.[47]

Self-Assessment 2.2

Low- and High-Context Communication Scale

Directions: Below are 32 statements regarding how you feel about communicating in different ways. In the blank to the left of each item, indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement. If you are unsure or think that an item does not apply to you, enter a 5 in the blank.

Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Strongly Agree

_____ 1. I catch on to what others mean, even when they do not say it directly.

_____ 2. I show respect to superiors, even if I dislike them.

_____ 3. I use my feelings to determine whether to trust another person.

_____ 4. I find silence awkward in conversation.

_____ 5. I communicate in an indirect fashion.

_____ 6. I use many colorful words when I talk.

_____ 7. In argument, I insist on very precise definitions.

_____ 8. I avoid clear-cut expressions of feelings when I communicate with others.

_____ 9. I am good at figuring out what others think of me.

_____ 10. My verbal and nonverbal speech tends to be very dramatic.

_____ 11. I listen attentively, even when others are talking in an uninteresting manner.

_____ 12. I maintain harmony in my communication with others.

_____ 13. Feelings are a valuable source of information.

_____ 14. When pressed for an opinion, I respond with an ambiguous statement/position.

_____ 15. I try to adjust myself to the feelings of the person with whom I am communicating.

_____ 16. I actively use a lot of facial expressions when I talk.

_____ 17. My feelings tell me how to act in a given situation.

_____ 18. I am able to distinguish between a sincere invitation and one intended as a gesture of politeness.

_____ 19. I believe that exaggerating stories makes conversation fun.

_____ 20. I orient people through my emotions.

_____ 21. I find myself initiating conversations with strangers while waiting in line.

_____ 22. As a rule, I openly express my feelings and emotions.

_____ 23. I feel uncomfortable and awkward in social situations where everybody else is talking except me.

_____ 24. I readily reveal personal things about myself.

_____ 25. I like to be accurate when I communicate.

_____ 26. I can read another person "like a book."

_____ 27. I use silence to avoid upsetting others when I communicate.

_____ 28. I openly show my disagreement with others.

_____ 29. I am a very precise communicator.

_____ 30. I can sit with another person, not say anything, and still be comfortable.

_____ 31. I think that untalkative people are boring.

_____ 32. I am an extremely open communicator.

Scoring: Reverse your score for Items 4, 6, 7, 10, 16, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 28, 29, 31, and 32. If your original score was 1, reverse it to a 9; if your original score was a 2, reverse it to an 8; and so on. After reversing the score for those 15 items, simply sum the 32 items. Lower scores indicate low-context communication. Higher scores indicate high-context communication.

At this point in the chapter, you have been given the opportunity to assess your own level of individualism–collectivism and the degree to which your communication style is high or low context. Whatever the outcome on these surveys, one style is not better than the other; they are simply different. The goal is for you to have a better understanding of yourself and those persons with different cultural backgrounds. Individualism–collectivism and high/low context are two dominant ways in which cultures differ. But perhaps what guides cultural behavior more than anything else is the values held by large collectives.

VALUE ORIENTATIONS

In his seminal book on values, Milton Rokeach argues that

the value concept, more than any other, should occupy a central position across all social sciences. . . . It is an intervening variable that shows promise of being able to unify the apparently diverse interests of all sciences concerned with human behavior.[48]

Values affect intercultural communication. When people from different cultures come together to interact, their messages are guided by and reflect their fundamental value orientations. People who strongly value individuality will likely interact differently than will people who strongly value collectivism. An understanding of cultural value systems can help identify similarities and differences between people from different cultures from which intercultural communication can proceed. Like culture, values are learned; they are not innate or universal. Rokeach argues that values guide us in the selection and justification of social behavior. Values prescribe what is preferred or prohibited. Values are the evaluative component of an individual's attitudes and beliefs. Values guide how we think about things in terms of what is right/wrong and correct/incorrect. Values trigger positive or negative emotions. Values also guide our actions.[49]

Israeli psychologist Shalom Schwartz asserts that values are concepts or beliefs that pertain to outcomes and behaviors, guide the selection and evaluation of behaviors, and are rank ordered according to their relative importance to the individual.[50] Although any individual probably has a unique set of values, there are also sets of values that are representative of a particular culture. Francis Hsu, an anthropologist who has lived much of his life in China and the United States, has outlined what he thinks are the nine basic values of Americans. His list was generated from his personal experiences, American literature and prose, social science research, and studies of criminal behavior in the United States.[51]

Hsu's Postulates of Basic American Values

1. An individual's most important concern is self-interest, self-expression, self-improvement, self-gratification, and independence. This takes precedence over all group interests.

2. The privacy of the individual is the individual's inalienable right. Intrusion into it by others is permitted only by invitation.

3. Because the government exists for the benefit of the individual and not vice versa, all forms of authority, including government, are suspect. Patriotism is good.

4. An individual's success in life depends on acceptance among his or her peers.

5. An individual should believe in or acknowledge God and should belong to an organized church or other religious institution. Religion is good. Any religion is better than no religion.

6. Men and women are equal.

7. All human beings are equal.

8. Progress is good and inevitable. An individual must improve himself/herself (minimize efforts and maximize returns); the government must be more efficient to tackle new problems; institutions such as churches must modernize to make themselves more attractive.

9. Being American is synonymous with being progressive, and America is the utmost symbol of progress.

Most of the values listed above reflect America's individualistic tendencies. In addition, they echo our emphasis on equality (which is discussed later under power distance) and our determination to push toward the future.

An interesting contrast to the values of America—an individualistic, low-context culture—are those of China—a collectivistic, high-context culture. A group of cross-cultural researchers calling themselves the Chinese Culture Connection (CCC) constructed a list of 40 dominant Chinese values. The CCC is an international network of social scientists under the direction of Michael Bond, a professor in the Department of Psychology at Chinese University of Hong Kong. The members of the CCC approached a number of Chinese social scientists and asked each of them to prepare a list of 10 fundamental and basic Chinese values. Although their procedure resulted in considerable overlap, they were able to eliminate redundancy by creating a master list of 40 values.[52]

The Chinese Value Survey

1. Filial piety (obedience to parents, respect for parents, honoring of ancestors)

2. Industry (working hard)

3. Tolerance of others

4. Harmony with others

5. Humbleness

6. Loyalty to superiors

7. Observation of rites and social rituals

8. Reciprocation of greetings, favors, and gifts

9. Kindness

10. Knowledge (education)

11. Solidarity with others

12. Moderation, following the middle way

13. Self-culturation

14. Ordering relationships by status and observing this order

15. Sense of righteousness

16. Benevolent authority

17. Non-competitiveness

(Continued)

(Continued)

18. Personal steadiness and stability

19. Resistance to corruption

20. Patriotism

21. Sincerity

22. Keeping oneself disinterested and pure

23. Thrift

24. Persistence

25. Patience

26. Repayment of both the good and evil that another person has caused you

27. A sense of cultural superiority

28. Adaptability

29. Prudence (carefulness)

30. Trustworthiness

31. Having a sense of shame

32. Courtesy

33. Contentedness with one's position in life

34. Being conservative

35. Protecting your "face"

36. A close, intimate friend

37. Chastity in women

38. Having few desires

39. Respect for tradition

40. Wealth

In related research, Zhang and Bond affirmed the dominance of filial piety in China. They argue that filial piety surpasses all other cultural ethics in Chinese culture. Specifically, filial piety prescribes how children should behave toward their parents, living or dead, as well as toward their ancestors. Chinese children are taught to provide for their parents' material and mental well-being, perform ceremonial ancestral worship, ensure the continuity of the family line, and conduct themselves in a way that brings honor to and avoids

shaming the family name. Zhang and Bond assert that Chinese filial piety extends beyond the limits of one's direct nuclear family. Chinese filial piety prescribes not only absolute parental authority over children but also, by extension, the authority of those senior in rank (i.e., age) over those junior in rank. Zhang and Bond maintain that Chinese filial piety influences myriad social behaviors—even in modern China, where Western, individualistic culture has been introduced.[53]

In their research on Chinese values in work organizations, Kao and Sek-Hong discovered that the Chinese values of trust, fidelity, altruism, and unspecified obligations of reciprocity norms are an important source of strategic advantage giving Chinese corporations resilience and flexibility to cope with change.[54] Researchers Domino and Hannah argue that Chinese values are taught early and can be seen in the stories told by Chinese children. In comparison with stories told by American children, the Chinese stories demonstrated greater social orientation, greater emphasis on public shame, fewer interpersonal confrontations, more instances of teamwork, more concern for the role of authority, greater preoccupation with moral and ethical rectitude, more expressions of sorrow and happiness, fewer instances of physical aggression, and less economic orientation.[55]

Schwartz's Universal Values

Shalom Schwartz and his colleagues have studied values across cultures. Schwartz's goal is to create a comprehensive classification scheme of the substantive content of human values that are shared across cultures. Although some disagree with his position, Schwartz argues that there is a universal structure to values recognized by all cultures. Schwartz's work focuses on the structure of values, not on the universality of their relative importance. Schwartz argues that values represent goals or motivations. He contends that values represent, in the form of goals, three universal requirements for human existence to which all cultures must be responsive: (a) the biological needs of individuals, (b) the need for social coordination, and (c) the survival and welfare needs of groups. From these three universal human requirements, Schwartz derived 11 distinct motivational value types (listed on p. 72). These motivational types lead to the formation of specific values and their priorities. To make the meaning of each motivational type more concrete and explicit, the specific values used to measure the motivational type are listed in parentheses.[56]

Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's Value Orientations

In the early 1960s, Florence Kluckhohn and Fred Strodtbeck developed the concept of value orientations. They argued that in every culture there are universal problems and conditions that must be addressed. For example, every culture must deal with the natural environment. All cultures must feed themselves. All cultures must face the issues of child rearing, and so on. For a given culture, however, there are a limited number of solutions to these problems. These possible solutions are motivated by the values of the culture. Initially, Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck created five sets of value orientations.[57] Several years later, communication researchers John Condon and Fathi Yousef extended the set to a total of 25 value orientations. Condon and Yousef organized the value orientations around six dominant themes: the self, the family, society, human nature, nature, and the supernatural.[58]

Schwartz's Motivational Types of Values

1. *Self-Direction:* The defining goal of this value type is independent thought and action. (freedom, creativity, independent, choosing own goals, curious, self-respect)

2. *Stimulation:* The goal is derived from the need for variety and stimulation in order to maintain an optimal level of activation. Some of these needs are biological, while others are learned/cultural. (an exciting life, a varied life, daring)

3. *Hedonism:* The need and motivation for pleasure. (pleasure, enjoying life)

4. *Achievement:* The need and value of personal success and prestige. (ambitious, influential, capable, successful, intelligent, self-respect)

5. *Power:* Attainment of social status. (social power, wealth, authority, preserving my public image, social recognition)

6. *Security:* Need for safety, harmony, and the stability of society and relationships. (national security, reciprocation of favors, family security, sense of belonging, social order, healthy, clean)

7. *Conformity:* Restraint of actions, inclinations, and impulses. (obedient, self-discipline, politeness, honoring of parents and elders)

8. *Tradition:* The value of religious rites, beliefs, and norms of behavior that, over time, are valued and passed on by a collective. (respect for children, devout, accepting of my portion in life, humble, moderate)

9. *Spirituality:* The goal of inner harmony through the transcendence of everyday life. (a spiritual life, meaning in life, inner harmony, detachment)

10. *Benevolence:* The need and motivation for positive interaction and affiliation. (helpful, responsible, forgiving, honest, loyal, mature love, true friendship)

11. *Universalism:* The value of understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature. (equality, unity with nature, wisdom, a world of beauty, social justice, broad-minded, protecting the environment, a world at peace)

The Condon and Yousef set of value orientations provides a structure and vocabulary that can be used to compare cultures. Although there are exceptions, many of the values on the left of the continuum are representative of individualistic, low-context cultures, while those on the right are representative of collectivistic, high-context cultures (see Table 2.4).

The Self

In all cultures, people develop their self-identity. How that identity is fostered is influenced by the culture's values. For example, people in individualistic societies, such as the United States, tend to view their accomplishments and failures very personally. Conformity is viewed negatively. Hsu notes that in China, however, conformity and cooperation are highly valued. In the United States, a person is seen as a unique individual and strives for independence

Table 2.4   The Condon and Yousef Set of Value Orientations

	Individualistic Low Context		Collectivistic High Context
THE SELF			
1. Individualism	Individualism	Individuality	Interdependence
2. Age	Youth	Middle years	Old age
3. Sex	Equality of sexes	Female superiority	Male superiority
4. Activity	Doing	Being-in-becoming	Being
THE FAMILY			
1. Relational orientations	Individualistic	Collateral	Lineal
2. Authority	Democratic	Authority centered	Authoritarian
3. Positional role behavior	Open	General	Specific—prescribed
4. Mobility	High mobility	Phasic mobility	Low mobility—stasis
SOCIETY			
1. Social reciprocity	Independence	Symmetrical—obligatory	Complementary—obligatory
2. Group membership	Many—brief membership	Balanced	Few—prolonged membership
3. Intermediaries	Few	Specialist only	Essential
4. Formality	Informal	Selective formality	Pervasive formality
5. Property	Private	Utilitarian	Communal
HUMAN NATURE			
1. Rationality	Rational	Intuitive	Irrational
2. Good/evil	Good	Mixture	Evil
3. Happiness/pleasure	Happiness as goal	Inextricable bond of happiness and sadness	Life is mostly sad
4. Mutability	Change, growth, learning	Some change	Unchanging
NATURE			
1. Relationship between humans and nature	Humans dominate nature	Harmonious	Nature dominates humans
2. Ways of knowing nature	Abstract	Circle of induction and deduction	Specific—direct
3. Structure of nature	Mechanistic	Spiritual	Organic
4. Concept of time	Future	Present	Past
THE SUPERNATURAL			
1. Relationship between humans and the supernatural	Humans as God	Pantheism	Humans controlled by supernatural
2. Meaning of life	Physical/material goals	Intellectual goals	Spiritual goals
3. Providence	Good is unlimited	Balance of good and misfortune	Good in life is limited
4. Knowledge of cosmic order	Order is comprehensible	Faith and reason	Mysterious and unknowable

from others. When individuals succeed or win, they receive a great deal of attention and adulation, as in the case of winning an Olympic gold medal or an Academy Award. The individual is "put on a pedestal." Likewise, when individuals lose, they are often left to suffer alone. No one wants to be seen with a loser. Whether on the top or on the bottom, the individual experiences intense emotions. Hsu contends that strong emotions are unavoidable because they are concentrated in one individual. The Chinese, however, are interdependent with others, and for them, responsibility and accountability are shared and divided among the group members. If the group wins, everyone in the group wins; there is no "most valuable player," so to speak. Therefore, the intense emotions experienced by winning or failing are tempered and moderated because they are shared.[59]

The second variation on the self continuum is age. Western, individualistic, low-context cultures tend to value youth. Conversely, old age is valued in many cultures, such as Nigeria, where it is associated with wisdom. According to Harris and Moran, in Nigeria the elderly are respected because they have much experience and can pass on family history and tradition. Harris and Moran suggest that when conducting business with Nigerians, a company would be wise to send an older person to meet with prospective businesspersons, as this will show a certain amount of respect for Nigeria's emphasis on age.[60]

The third variation on the self is activity. Americans identify themselves in terms of their activities, usually professions and occupations. Condon and Yousef hold that many English names indicate "doers," such as Baker, Smith, and Carpenter, for example. In the United States, people are often asked about what they "do" for a living. Some non-Western cultures emphasize being, a form of self-actualization. In this view, life is an organic whole; it is human to embrace life and to become one with the universe and oneself.[61]

The Family

Familial relationships differ across cultures. Harris and Moran write that in Nigeria, for example, the family is the core group of society. Nigerians value their family lineage through the male head of the household. A Nigerian is known by his or her family lineage and may have privileges and responsibilities based on family name. Furthermore, marriage is seen as a way of producing more children to contribute to this lineage. If one's spouse is sterile, it is grounds for divorce. Nigerians also practice polygamy. Wives are often acquired through the payment of a bride price to the bride's parents.[62]

Positional role behavior within families refers to how strictly roles are prescribed among family members. The Guatemalan Ladinos (a term used to refer to people born through interracial relationships or those who have Spanish and Indian blood) define a man's and woman's role within the family quite differently. Mike Keberlein, who grew up in Guatemala, argues that machismo is a Spanish concept that deals mainly with how male and female roles are performed in the home. Ladinos view the men as protectors and providers and women as child rearers and homemakers. Children are taught early by their mother to recognize their responsibilities as men and women. A boy may be sent to work in the fields when he is as young as 5 years old. A young girl might start household chores at the same age, where she is taught to care for younger children of the house and to cook. Young boys are expected never to cry or show signs of pain, whereas young girls are taught to show emotion whenever appropriate.[63]

Society

According to Condon and Yousef, social reciprocity refers to the mutual exchanges people make in their dealings with others. What is perceived as a relatively innocuous request in one country may be interpreted quite seriously in others. In the United States, a request to do a favor (e.g., "Can I borrow your car?") may imply no necessary reciprocity. In other cultures, one is required to return favors and obligations in kind. Equal exchanges are expected and obligatory.[64]

The second value orientation, group membership, differs greatly among individualistic and collectivistic cultures. According to Condon and Yousef, members of individualistic cultures tend to join many groups throughout their lifetime, yet their affiliation with any particular group may be quite brief. The group is subordinate to the individual's needs. In the United States, for example, people join political groups, social groups, hobby groups, occupational groups, self-help groups, fraternal groups, and so on. In collectivistic cultures, people tend to belong to fewer groups (e.g., family and occupational) but belong for a lifetime.[65]

An intermediary is a go-between; intermediaries are more common in collectivistic than in individualistic cultures. Many Chinese prefer to work through an intermediary. The concept of *mian-zi,* or "face," is a critical ingredient for Chinese. The Chinese believe that respect for others binds society together. Mian-zi is a sort of social status, or how a person is ranked in relation to others. This is sometimes referred to as one's "face." A person's face is determined by such things as wealth and power. Chinese are very conscious of their face as well as the face of others. The higher in rank a person is, the more critical the concern with face. In business dealings and in personal relationships, it is critical to the Chinese that they maintain face and avoid offending the face of others. Hence, it is difficult for the Chinese to be straightforward and open in their daily interactions with others. Intermediaries are, therefore, essential in both personal and business relationships. Accordingly, the notion of losing face means that an individual loses his or her social position or prestige in front of others. When local senior executives perceive the local staff to be incompetent, they may feel that they risk "losing face" vis-à-vis headquarters' management and expatriates. To save face, these executives may think about quitting or involving an intermediary.[66]

Human Nature

The human nature orientation deals with how cultures perceive human character and temperament. In Western cultures such as the United States, people are viewed as essentially rational. American children are taught to "use their heads" when making decisions. Americans frequently tell their friends to "stop being so emotional," as if being emotional implied some character flaw. Japanese children, on the other hand, are often taught to follow their intuition or to lead with their hearts. Condon and Yousef note that in the United States, happiness is viewed as a practical goal, even the primary goal—hence the popular song titled "Don't Worry, Be Happy." Moreover, the Declaration of Independence states that people "are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Other societies and cultures view happiness and sadness as inseparable, as in the yin–yang philosophy of many Asian cultures. A Chinese proverb reads, "If a man's face does not show a little sadness, his thoughts are not too deep." Another one reads, "One should not miss the flavor of being sick, nor miss the experience of being destitute."[67]

Nature

In the United States, high school students learn about the structure of nature in their biology, geography, and physics classes, among others. Students learn about things they may never actually see, such as the structure of DNA. The models they see are not literal reproductions but, rather, dramatic abstractions. Much of the education taught in the United States is based on abstract concepts and constructs. Condon and Yousef maintain that in other cultures, perhaps those with little formal education, what a person knows about nature is learned through direct experience. Many Western cultures view nature as mechanistic, meaning that nature is structured much like a machine or clock. The brain, for example, is explained using computer analogies. Models of DNA look like double helixes. The organic orientation likens nature to a plant, where nature is seen as an organic whole that is interdependent with all other natural forces.[68]

The Supernatural

Condon and Yousef assert that a culture's perspective on the cosmos reflects its philosophy about its people's relationship with the supernatural and spiritual world. In many Western cultures, the supernatural is studied almost scientifically. Scientists study the structure of space and seek, through scientific means, to find the origins of the universe. We send out satellites equipped with printed messages and recordings in an (perhaps vain) attempt to communicate with extraterrestrials. Most Western cultures believe that the order of the cosmos is knowable. Conversely, other cultures view the cosmos with a great deal of fear and uncertainty. Condon and Yousef point to a farmer in Peru who relies on the phases of the moon and the cycles of the seasons to tell him when to plant or harvest his fields. The farmer thinks of the cosmos with a great deal of superstition and fear. To him, these mysteries are unexplainable.[69]

The organization of the value orientations presented above is neither mutually exclusive nor exhaustive. They are representative of the kinds of values held by cultures and the differences in those values. They also serve as a starting point for researchers to compare and contrast the myriad cultures that cohabit the planet.

POWER DISTANCE

According to Hofstede, while many cultures declare and even legislate equality for their members, all cultures must deal with the issue of human inequality. A fundamental tenet expressed in the beginning of the Declaration of Independence, the document on which the United States was founded, states that "we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal." In the United States, we generally try to treat others as equal, in both our personal and professional lives. Although some cultures, like the United States, affirm equality for their members, some form of inequality exists in virtually every culture. Inequality can occur in areas such as prestige, wealth, power, human rights, and technology, among others. Issues of inequality fall within the rubric of what Hofstede calls "power distance." In his landmark survey research, Geert Hofstede defined power distance as "the extent to which

the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally."[70] Power distance can be seen in families, in bureaucracies, and even in friendships. Inequality of power within organizations is inevitable and desirable in many cases for organizations to function effectively. For example, military organizations are defined by power distance.

Hofstede categorizes cultures as possessing either large or small power distance. Cultures with a smaller power distance emphasize that inequalities among people should be minimized and that there should be interdependence between less-powerful and more-powerful people. In cultures with small power distance (e.g., the United States, Canada, Austria), family members are generally treated as equal and familial decisions are reached democratically. According to Hofstede, in small power distance schools, teachers expect a certain amount of initiative and interaction with students. The overall educational process is student oriented. In class, students are expected to ask questions and perhaps even challenge their teachers. In organizations, decentralization is popular, where subordinates engage in participative decision making. The organizational power hierarchy is mostly for convenience, where the persons who occupy powerful roles may change regularly. In fact, workers are expected to try to "climb the ladder of success" to more power and prestige. In this sense, persons in small power distance cultures may recognize "earned" power—that is, power that people deserve by virtue of their drive, hard work, and motivation. Moreover, small power distance cultures tend to resent those whose power is decreed by birth or wealth (i.e., positional power).[71]
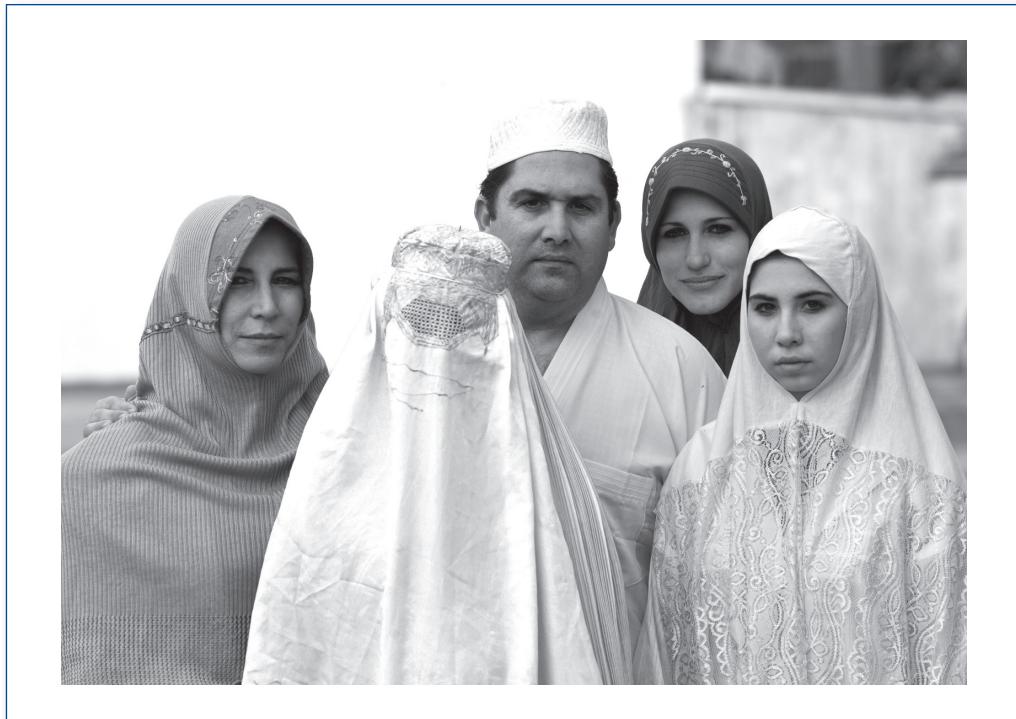
Hofstede maintains that in cultures with a larger power distance, inequalities among people are both expected and desired. Less powerful people should be dependent on more powerful people.

In larger power distance cultures (e.g., the Philippines, Mexico, India), children are expected to be obedient. In many larger power distance cultures, there is a strict hierarchy among family members where typically the father rules authoritatively, followed by the eldest son and moving down the ladder by age and sex (see Figure 2.3). In educational settings, teachers are treated as parents—with respect and honor—especially older teachers. Students who disobey may be punished severely. In the workplace, power is usually centralized, and workers and bosses are treated unequally. In many large power distance cultures, Hofstede observed that workers are generally uneducated and superiors are entitled to special privileges and status—in some cultures, by law.[72]

There appears to be a direct link between power distance and the latitude of the country. In a study conducted at 40 universities in the United States, Peter Andersen and his colleagues found a strong correlation between latitude and authoritarianism. Residents in the northern U.S. states were less authoritarian than those in the southern United States. The population of a country may be another predictor of power distance. Generally, larger cultures tend to have larger power distance (see Table 2.5). As the size of any group increases, it becomes unwieldy and difficult to manage informally.[73]

Large and small power distance cultures may value different types of power. Large power distance cultures tend to emphasize positional power. Positional power is based on formal authority (e.g., family rank). Persons with positional power have control over rewards, punishments, and information. Small power distance cultures recognize and respect earned power. Earned power is based on an individual's accomplishments, hard work, and effort.

| **Figure 2.3** | In many cultures, there is a strict hierarchy among family members. |

| **Table 2.5** | Small and Large Power Distance Cultures |

Small Power Distance Cultures	Large Power Distance Cultures
Austria	Malaysia
Denmark	Guatemala
New Zealand	Panama
Ireland	Philippines
Sweden	Mexico
Norway	Venezuela
Finland	Ecuador
Switzerland	Indonesia
Great Britain	India
Germany	Brazil

STUDENT VOICES ACROSS CULTURES

Power Distance

My name is Ahmed I. Alshaya, and I am from Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. I graduated from St. Norbert College with a major in business administration.

Saudi Arabia is a large power distance country for reasons concerned with favorability of outcomes. The culture merely focuses on the outcomes that do not disturb the harmony of the people. Power distance in Saudi Arabia is defined by age and sex. There is a hierarchical structure in almost all families. In a typical Saudi family, since there is a hierarchical structure, obviously the father is the head of the house. He is the one in charge of the house in all aspects. The father has some responsibilities that he must provide to his house. The father is responsible for teaching his offspring the moral traits. That is, the family must obey the father and treats him with respect and honor. The role then goes to the elder son if the father is not available. There is, of course, a dependence on the one in charge, and usually the family depends on him in making decisions.

Moving to a bigger scale, society plays a big role in shaping the people of Saudi Arabia. The elderly are always seen as people who are wise and are capable of leading the community to prosperity. Usually, people are expected to treat the elderly with respect. For example, at a time of conflict, the elderly would always step in to resolve a problem, and all the parties involved have to acknowledge the issue and have some respect for the decision that has been made. The "self-face" and the "other-face" are concerns for people who are involved. The "face" is a concern because if not properly maintained, it will bring disgrace to the family. The "face" is recognized in many ways. It is present during all social gatherings; the elderly are always treated with respect because the host and his sons must save their "self-face" by properly making the elderly feel comfortable.

In the workplace, Saudi is considered to be power distance oriented especially in the relationship between subordinates and their employees. There is a strong hierarchical structure. Employers must be treated with respect because they have authority in the organization. Different organizations have different approaches, but most commonly, employees do not participate in the decision-making role.

Measuring Power Distance

If we know the position of a culture on the power distance scale relative to our own culture, then we have a starting point from which to proceed in our understanding of that culture. In large power distance cultures, subordinates are extremely submissive, whereas in small power distance cultures, subordinates are confrontational. Power distance tells us about dependence relationships in a given culture. In those countries where a small power distance is observed (e.g., Austria, Norway), there is limited dependence. Workers in these cultures prefer managers who consult with them in decision making. Here, subordinates are generally comfortable approaching and interacting with their superiors. In cultures with large power distance (e.g., Malaysia, Mexico, India), there is considerable dependence of subordinates on superiors.

Self-Assessment 2.3

Power Distance Scale

Directions: Below are 10 statements regarding issues we face at work, in the classroom, and at home. Indicate in the blank to the left of each statement the degree to which you (1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) are unsure, (4) disagree, and (5) strongly disagree with the statement. For example, if you strongly agree with the first statement, place a 1 in the blank. Work quickly and record your initial response.

_____ 1. Within an organization, employees should feel comfortable expressing disagreements to their managers.

_____ 2. Within a classroom, students should be allowed to express their points of view toward a subject without being punished by the teacher/professor.

_____ 3. At home, children should be allowed to openly disagree with their parents.

_____ 4. The primary purpose of a manager is to monitor the work of the employees to make sure they are doing their jobs appropriately.

_____ 5. Authority is essential for the efficient running of an organization, classroom, or home.

_____ 6. At work, people are more productive when they are closely supervised by those in charge.

_____ 7. In problem-solving situations within organizations, input from employees is important.

_____ 8. Generally, employees, students, and children should be seen and not heard.

_____ 9. Obedience to managers, teachers, and parents is good.

_____ 10. Managers, teachers, and parents should be considered equal to their workers, students, and children.

Scoring: For Items 4, 5, 6, 8, and 9, reverse your responses. That is, if your original response was a 1, reverse it to a 5. If your original response was a 2, reverse it to a 4 and so on. Once you have reversed your responses for these items, sum your 10 responses. This sum is your power distance score. Lower scores equal smaller power distance.

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Communication and Power Distance

Power distance affects the verbal and nonverbal behavior of a culture. Several studies have investigated power distance and communication during conflict. In their research, Tyler, Lind, and Huo found that power distance influences the way that people react to

third-party authorities in conflict situations. Specifically, they found that when making evaluations of authorities, persons in small power distance cultures placed more value on the quality of their treatment by authorities. In contrast, those with larger power distance values focused more strongly on the favorability of their outcomes. Tyler, Lind, and Huo suggest that the degree to which authorities can gain acceptance for themselves and their decisions through providing dignified, respectful treatment is influenced by the cultural values of the disputants. Specifically, they found that dispute resolution methods, such as mediation, are more likely to be effective among those who have small power distance values.[74]

In another study, Smith, Dugan, Peterson, and Leung examined how managers handled disagreement with their subordinates. Their results showed that the larger the power distance, the more frequent are reports of out-group disagreements; and the smaller the power distance, the more likely managers are to ask peers to handle disagreements and to use subordinates to handle disagreements. The authors conclude that in small power distance cultures, managers minimize status differences during conflict and rely on peers and subordinates to assist in mediating conflict.[75]

Ting-Toomey has examined power distance and the concepts of *face* and *facework* in conflict situations. Ting-Toomey and others argue that persons in all cultures have face concerns. Face represents an individual's sense of positive self-image in the context of communication. According to Ting-Toomey, everyone, in all cultures, has face concerns during conflict. *Self-face* is the concern for one's own image, *other-face* is concern for another's image, and *mutual-face* is concern for both parties. *Facework* is used to manage these face concerns during conflict. Ting-Toomey's research has shown that small power distance cultures have a greater self-face concern, have lesser other- and mutual-face concerns, use more dominating facework, and use less avoiding facework.[76]

Other research has investigated how power distance affects reactions to messages about alcohol warnings. Perea and Slater examined the responses of Mexican American and Anglo young adults to four televised drinking and driving warnings. The messages were manipulated into large and small power distance appeals by attributing or not attributing them to the Surgeon General—that is, an authority with power. Anglos (small power distance) rated the warnings without the Surgeon General as more believable than warnings with the Surgeon General; the opposite was true for Latinos (large power distance).[77]

Student–teacher relationships exist in virtually every culture. Generally, teachers possess more legitimate and expert power than do their students (see Figure 2.4). In an interesting examination of student–teacher relationships in small (i.e., Britain) and large (i.e., China) power distance cultures, Spencer-Oatey found that Chinese students reported a larger power differential between themselves and their Chinese teachers than did the British students with their British teachers. Yet the Chinese reported their relationships with their teachers to be interpersonally closer than did the British. Moreover, the Chinese students reported that the power differential between them and their teachers was acceptable. Consistent with their value of filial piety, one Chinese student commented that one should "treat teachers as you would treat your elders." On the other hand, the British students were significantly less accepting of the power differential between them and their teachers, even though that differential was small. One British student reported that teachers "certainly have these powers, but shouldn't have."[78]

Figure 2.4	In many cultures (especially large power distance cultures), teachers may hold more power over students than do parents.
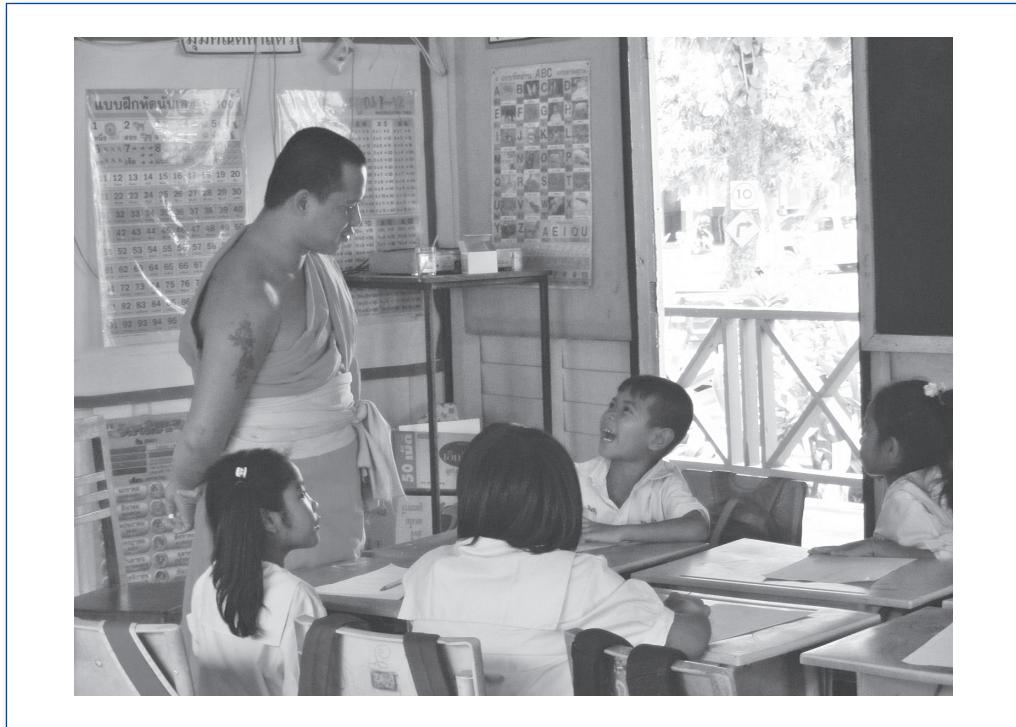
In another interesting study, Michael Bond and his colleagues found that persons in large power distance cultures respond differently to verbal insults than do persons in small power distance cultures. In their comparison of Chinese and American students, they found that the Chinese were less critical of an insulter as long as the insulter had higher status than the in-group. Americans, on the other hand, made no distinction as a function of the insulter's status.[79]

Power distance also affects the nonverbal behavior of a culture. In many large power distance cultures, persons of lower status are taught not to give direct eye contact to a person of higher status. Indirect eye contact from a subordinate signals to the superior that the subordinate recognizes his or her lower status. In large power distance cultures, when a person of high status hands something to a person of lower status (e.g., a book), the lower status person will often use both hands to receive the item, again recognizing his or her lower status. Andersen, Hecht, Hoobler, and Smallwood have observed that many large power distance cultures prohibit interclass dating, marriage, and contact. They also suggest that persons of lower power must become skilled at decoding nonverbal behavior and that persons of lower status must show only positive emotions to those of higher status. Moreover, in large power distance cultures, persons of lower status smile more in an effort to appease those of higher status.[80]

AN INTERCULTURAL CONVERSATION:
LARGE AND SMALL POWER DISTANCE CULTURES

Different power distance orientations manifest themselves in interaction. In the dialogue below, Jim Neuman is a U.S. high school exchange student in Guatemala. Coming from a smaller power distance culture, Jim is accustomed to interacting with his teachers. Raising one's hand in a U.S. classroom is not only acceptable but encouraged. In Guatemala, a larger power distance culture, the classroom is teacher centered. In Mr. Gutierrez's classroom, there is to be strict order, with Mr. Gutierrez initiating all the communication. Teachers are to be treated with deference.

Mr. Gutierrez:	This morning I will be discussing some points about Guatemala's geography. Guatemala is the northernmost country of Central America. (Jim Neuman raises his hand) To the north it borders the countries of El Salvador and Honduras. To the west, its natural border is the Pacific Ocean. In the east is another natural border, the Atlantic Ocean, as well as the country of Belize.
Jim Neuman:	(Raising his hand and waving it slightly) Mr. Gutierrez?
Mr. Gutierrez:	Guatemala is called the "Land of the Eternal Spring." There are all the same kinds of natural land forms as in Mexico but are (Jim Neuman interrupts)
Jim Neuman:	Mr. Gutierrez, I have a question.
Mr. Gutierrez:	Jim, stop interrupting, please.
Jim Neuman:	May I ask a question?
Mr. Gutierrez:	No! If you continue to disobey, I will punish you! Be quiet!

In the above dialogue, Jim does not understand Mr. Gutierrez's harsh reprimand. Coming from a small power distance culture, Jim recognizes that teachers have more power than students but does not see their power as absolute. Jim sees himself as an active participant of the class. After all, for most of his life Jim's teachers have encouraged him to speak up in class. Mr. Gutierrez, on the other hand, sees the classroom as his domain, one that he rules absolutely. By raising his hand, Jim demonstrates his insolence toward Mr. Gutierrez. To some extent, a certain degree of power distance is essential if cultures are to survive. Legitimate power is a necessity of civil life. Yet independence from power, liberation, and freedom of choice are politically attractive alternatives. Perhaps the ideal situation is one where individual families operate with internally driven large power distances while the larger cultural milieu restricts overbearing, omnipotent, and intimidating governments.

UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE

Gudykunst and Kim state that communicating with someone from an unknown culture can be uncomfortable because such situations are replete with uncertainty and unpredictability. When uncertainty is high, anxiety is usually high, and communication can be difficult and

awkward. This may account for why some people avoid interacting with people from other cultures. By reducing uncertainty, however, anxiety can be reduced, which, in turn, facilitates effective and successful communication. Although uncertainty is probably a universal feature of initial intercultural communication, one's level of tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity varies across cultures. In addition, argue Gudykunst and Kim, the communicative strategies for reducing uncertainty also vary across cultures. Persons in high-context cultures, for example, look to the environmental, sociorelational, and perceptual contexts for information to reduce uncertainty. People in low-context cultures tend to rely on verbal information-seeking strategies, usually by asking lots of questions.[81]

Hofstede asserts that although the extent to which an individual experiences uncertainty and the subsequent strategies for reducing it may be unique to that person, a general orientation toward uncertainty can be shared culturally. According to Hofstede, tolerance for uncertainty is learned through cultural socialization. Hofstede notes that a culture's technology, system of laws, and religion are markers for how that culture addresses and attempts to avoid or reduce uncertainty. For example, some kinds of technology help a culture manage natural uncertainty (e.g., weather), systems of law are designed to prevent and account for behavioral uncertainties (e.g., crime), and religion can help a culture cope with supernatural uncertainty (e.g., death). A culture's technology, law, and religion are ingrained in the individual through socialization, education, and occupation. Hence, they lead to collective patterns of tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty.[82]

Uncertainty avoidance is the degree to which the members of a particular culture feel threatened by uncertain or unknown situations. Hofstede contends that this feeling is expressed through nervous stress and in a felt need for predictability and for written and unwritten rules. Cultures possess either a weak or a strong uncertainty avoidance orientation. In cultures with a weak uncertainty avoidance orientation, uncertainty is seen as a normal part of life, where each day is accepted as it comes. The people are comfortable with ambiguity and are guided by a belief that what is different is curious. In school settings, students are comfortable with open-ended learning situations and enjoy classroom discussion. In the workplace, time is needed only as a guide, not as a master. Precision and punctuality are learned because they do not come naturally. Workers are motivated by their achievements and personal esteem or belongingness. There is also a high tolerance for innovative ideas that may conflict with the norm.[83]

Conversely, cultures with a strong uncertainty avoidance orientation sense that uncertainty in life is a continuous threat that must be fought. Life can be stressful where a sense of urgency and high anxiety are typical. Hofstede maintains that strong uncertainty avoidant cultures are guided by the belief that what is different is dangerous. Uncertainty avoidant cultures evade ambiguity in most situations and look for structure in their business organizations, home life, and relationships. At school, students are most comfortable in structured environments. The teachers are supposed to have all the right answers. On the job, time is money; punctuality and precision are expected. There is generally a resistance to innovative ideas, and workers are motivated by job security.[84]

## A THEORY OF UNCERTAINTY ORIENTATION

Related to Hofstede's concept of uncertainty avoidance is the theory of uncertainty orientation. According to this variation of Hofstede's ideas, some individuals are considered uncertainty oriented and others are considered certainty oriented. Uncertainty-oriented

individuals have a weak uncertainty avoidance tendency, while certainty-oriented individuals have a strong uncertainty avoidance tendency. Uncertainty-oriented persons' preferred method of handling uncertainty is to seek out information and to engage in activity that will directly resolve the uncertainty. These people try to understand and discover aspects of the self and the environment about which they are uncertain.

Certainty-oriented people, on the other hand, develop a self-regulatory style that circumvents uncertainty. Given the choice, persons who are certainty oriented will undertake activity that maintains clarity; when confronted with uncertainty, they will rely on others or on heuristic devices more than on more direct methods of resolving uncertainty (see Figure 2.5).

Generally, Eastern cultures have a preference for certainty, whereas Western cultures are uncertainty oriented (see Table 2.6). The tendency to be individualistic or self-oriented in Western populations exists because uncertainty-oriented people like to find out new information about the self. The more personally relevant or uncertain the situation, the more

Figure 2.5 Uncertainty and Certainty Orientations
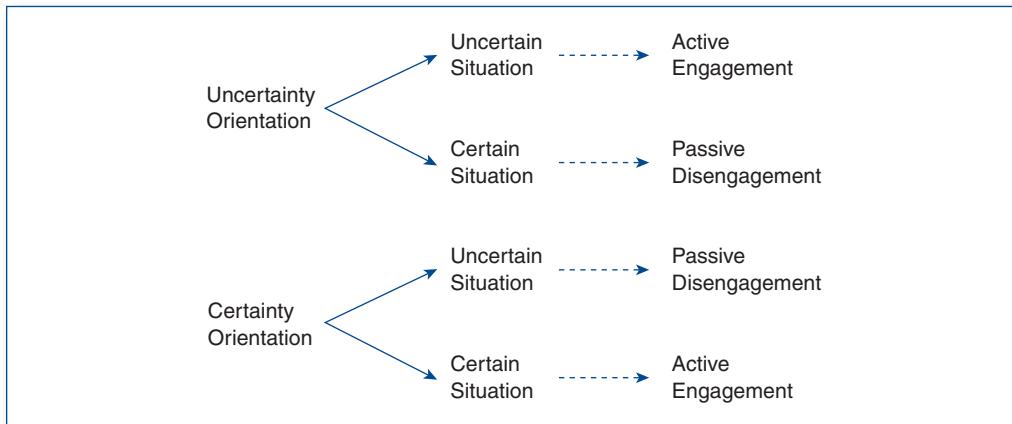
Table 2.6 Certainty- and Uncertainty-Oriented Cultures

Certainty-Oriented Cultures	Uncertainty-Oriented Cultures
Japan	United States
Guatemala	Canada
Portugal	New Zealand
Peru	Sweden
El Salvador	Ireland
Panama	Great Britain
Chile	Denmark
Spain	South Africa
Uruguay	Norway

uncertainty-oriented persons will be actively engaged in the situation. Certainty-oriented people, however, are more group oriented, as the group provides a clear standard for norms and behavior, a standard that can be embraced by the certainty oriented. Western societies tend to be more uncertainty oriented because of their self-oriented and individualistic approaches to life than do people in Eastern societies, who, in turn, should be more certainty oriented as a function of their heavy reliance on groups.[85]

AN INTERCULTURAL CONVERSATION: WEAK AND STRONG UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE

One's uncertainty avoidance orientation may manifest itself in interaction in any number of ways. In the dialogue presented below, Kelly and Keiko are interacting about a dinner invitation. Kelly, from the United States, possesses a relatively weak uncertainty avoidance index, while Keiko, from Japan, comes from a culture with a relatively strong uncertainty avoidance index.

Keiko: Hey, Kelly, let's do something tonight.

Kelly: All right.

Keiko: Please come over to my house and I'll cook dinner for you.

Kelly: I have invited some friends over to my house for dinner tonight, but I don't know if they're coming.

Keiko: Well . . . as soon as you know if they're coming, let me know.

Kelly: I won't know until tonight.

Keiko: What time?

Kelly: I won't know until they call me. They'll probably call later this afternoon.

Keiko: How will you know whether or not to cook enough for everyone?

Kelly: Oh, I'll make up something on the spot. I like to cook. I'll whip up something fast.

Keiko: But . . . what if they don't come? Won't they call and let you know?

Kelly: No . . . if they don't come, I'll know that something else came up. I'll let you know as soon as I can.

Keiko: Maybe we should plan my dinner for some other night.

In the above dialogue, Keiko is confused by Kelly's easygoing attitude toward the evening's plans. Coming from a strong uncertainty-avoidant culture, Keiko would prefer to plan ahead to avoid uncertainty and prepare her script for the evening. Kelly, on the other

hand, is perfectly comfortable making plans based on how the evening progresses. Without a plan, how will Keiko know how to act? Although the feelings associated with uncertainty are personal and subjective, they can be shared by whole cultures. Although anxiety creates the same physiological responses in humans, what triggers anxiety and one's level of tolerance for it is learned. A culture's orientation toward uncertainty can be found in its families, schools, and institutions. But uncertainty avoidance ultimately manifests itself in human interaction.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

In the contextual model of intercultural communication, culture is the largest context, surrounding all the other contexts. This chapter has presented the paradox of culture. On one hand, culture is amorphous; it is shapeless, vague, and nebulous. Most of us are not aware of its influence on our daily behaviors. On the other hand, culture is arguably the strongest influence on an individual's cognitive, affective, and behavioral choices. Over the past few decades, anthropologists, psychologists, and sociologists have isolated several dimensions of cultural variability by which cultures can be compared. This chapter has focused on five of these dimensions, including the extent to which we place individual goals over those of the group (i.e., individualism) or the degree to which we see ourselves as members of a group first, then as an individual (i.e., collectivism). Another dimension is high–low context, which refers to the extent to which we gather information from the physical, social, and psychological context (i.e., high context), or the extent to which we gather information from the verbal code (i.e., low context). One of the most influential features of our lives is our value orientation. A culture's values guide its decisions as to what is right or wrong, decent or indecent, moral or immoral. Cultures also differ regarding the extent to which people accept and expect that power is distributed unequally (i.e., large power distance) or believe that people are inherently equal (i.e., small power distance). And finally, cultures differ in the extent to which people accept and tolerate uncertainty and unpredictability in their lives (i.e., weak uncertainty avoidance) or the extent to which uncertainty should be fought and conquered (i.e., strong uncertainty avoidance). These dimensions provide a starting point for our future examination of intercultural communication.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do you feel that you belong to an individualistic or collectivistic culture? Why? What are the signs?

2. What are some of the ways that you use high-context communication? What are some of the ways that you use low-context communication? Which do you prefer?

3. Is your relationship with your professors indicative of large or small power distance?

4. Is your relationship with your parents indicative of large or small power distance?

5. If you have no plans for the upcoming weekend, does that make you feel anxious, or are you comfortable with not knowing? Depending on your answer, are you certainty or uncertainty oriented?

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS WITHIN THE CULTURAL CONTEXT

If you were born and raised in the United States, you are probably relatively individualistic, low context, small power distance, and have a weak uncertainty avoidance tendency. Seeing the various dimensions of cultural variability discussed in this chapter, consider the following situations and how you might address them.

1. A Saudi working in the United States wakes up ill. He sends his younger brother to work for him that day. The U.S. employer, sends the brother home. What happened?

   The Saudi has not yet learned that in the United States, relatives usually cannot substitute for one another. Perhaps in other cultures, it is acceptable to have one's siblings or even friends fill in on the job. If the job is done, what difference does it make? What would you do? How would you handle the situation?

2. You are at a social gathering and meet Dr. Dinesh Mammen, a local physician from India who has been living and practicing medicine in the United States for many years. You meet his wife, who has her bachelor's degree in biology and a master's degree in chemistry. You ask about her career and what she does for a living. Dr. Mammen pauses, smiles, and asserts that she stays home and takes care of his needs. How do you react? Do you think Mrs. Mammen should be following a career path related to her college degrees?

KEY TERMS

collectivism   49

high context   63

horizontal collectivism   58

horizontal individualism   56

individualism   48

low context   63

power distance   76

uncertainty avoidance   84

vertical collectivism   58

vertical individualism   56

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