CHAPTER 2

Cultural Context

The 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]

Chapter Objectives

After reading this chapter, you should be able to

1. Compare and contrast individualism and collectivism.
2. Identify some cultures that are individualistic and some that are collectivistic.
3. Compare and contrast high- and low-context cultures.
4. Identify some cultures that are high context and some that are low context.
5. Compare value orientations among cultures.
6. Compare and contrast high and low power distance cultures.
7. Identify some cultures that are high power distance and some that are low power distance.
8. Compare and contrast high and low uncertainty avoidant cultures.
9. Identify some cultures that are weak uncertainty avoidant and some that are strong uncertainty avoidant.
10. Assess your degree of individualism/collectivism, high/low context, and power distance.

T he 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 *inter-act* with others; in other words, communicate. In many respects the terms *communication* and *culture* can be used interchangeably. The influence of culture on human interaction is paradoxical. As we conduct our daily lives most of us are unaware of our culture. Yet culture influences our every thought, feeling, and action. As the 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. Through socialization individuals learn the dominant values of their particular culture and their self-identities.[2]

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. These dimensions are representative of the different implicit cultural theories. 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. The cultural continua allow for the representation of the dimensions as continuous and varying in magnitude by degree. No culture is purely and absolutely individualistic or collectivistic, for example. Instead, a culture may be more individualistic or more collectivistic than some other culture. Moreover, these cultural dimensions of variability are not opposites; that is, they may coexist in some cultures. In addition, many cultures are in a state of great transition.

Collectivistic cultures might gravitate toward individualism while individualistic cultures adopt collectivistic values. 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, are more individualistic than their parents and especially their grandparents.

Likewise, although the United States is considered one of the most individual-
istic cultures on the planet, many U.S. businesses and corporations employ col-
lectivistic management models in the workplace, focusing on teamwork and
cooperation. 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 that is used to
compare and contrast cultures and microcultures is individualism-collectivism
(see Figure 2.2).

Individualism ◀━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━▶ Collectivism

Figure 2.2

Cultures falling on one side of the continuum are individualistic while
those falling toward the other side are collectivistic. Cultures falling at the mid-
point might possess both individualistic and collectivistic characteristics.
Gayle and Knutson write that Norwegians, for example, possess both individ-
ualistic 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 Norwegians con-
form to social norms, the individual Norwegian rebuffs traditional rules and
standards. Norwegians strive for independence yet do not depend on others
to recognize their individual achievements. Norwegians believe that they
must recognize their own good qualities in order to gain self-esteem.[3]

Perhaps Norway is unusual to the degree that its people carry collec-
tivistic and individualistic tendencies, but regardless of culture, most persons
carry to some degree both individualistic and collectivistic tendencies. The
difference is that in some cultures individualistic tendencies tend to domi-
nate while in others, collectivistic tendencies dominate.[4]

Harry Triandis, from the University of Illinois, is well known for his work
on individualism and collectivism. Triandis writes that in individualistic cul-
tures, emphasis is placed on individuals' goals over group goals. In individ-
ualistic cultures 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 apti-
tudes. In many individualistic cultures people are taught to be creative, self-
reliant, competitive, and assertive.[5]

Triandis argues that an important ingredient of individualistic cultures is that the individual is emotionally disconnected from ingroups 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 individualist 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.[6]

Triandis traces the origins of individualism to ancient Greece, where literature (e.g., the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*) celebrates the accomplishments of individuals. 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 individualist. In many cases, individualistic cultures are often 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 individualist cultures have a history of colonization, for example.[7]

Affluence also correlates with individualism. Financial independence means that one may be less dependent on others to satisfy needs. As cultures become more affluent, they tend to become more individualistic. Some scholars even link climate to individualism and collectivism. Cultures in cooler climates tend to be individualistic and cultures in warmer climates tend to be collectivistic. Colder climates are likely to foster and support individual initiative and innovative solutions to problems. Warmer climates render individual achievements less necessary. Many English-speaking Western cultures are considered individualistic (e.g., United States, Canada). Many Western European cultures also are individualistic (e.g., Germany, Switzerland, England).[8]

In contrast, according to Triandis, in collectivistic cultures, group goals have precedence over individual goals. Collectivistic cultures stress values that serve the ingroup by subordinating personal goals for the sake of preserving the ingroup. 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 ingroup) where responsibility is shared and accountability is collective. A person is seen not as an individual, but as a member of a group.[9]

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 persons in individualistic cultures. Unlike the individualist, the collectivist is emotionally connected to the ingroup. A collectivist's values and beliefs are consistent with and reflect those of the ingroup. Moreover, a collectivist's association with his or her ingroups 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 ingroup 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.[10]

Ecological factors can affect the level of collectivism in certain societies. Isolated societies, such as island cultures, tend to be collectivistic. People have very clear ideas about what behaviors are appropriate. People follow the norms of the society closely since they are less likely to be influenced by neighboring cultures. In addition, Triandis believes that collectivism is based on the tenet that collaboration and cooperation ultimately lead to survival. Both collaboration and cooperation require obedience and harmony, which is typically managed and coordinated by someone in charge, such as an authority. Authority, or one's rank in the group, is a salient feature of many collectivistic cultures. Collectivists tend to see each other as hierarchically ranked roles, not individuals. Collectivism can be found in parts of Europe like Southern Italy and rural Greece. Much of Africa, Asia, and Latin America is considered collectivistic (see Table 2.1).[11]

Table 2.1

Individualistic-Oriented Cultures	*Collectivistic-Oriented Cultures*
United States	Guatemala
Australia	Ecuador
Great Britain	Panama
Canada	Venezuela
Netherlands	Colombia
New Zealand	Indonesia
Italy	Pakistan
Belgium	Costa Rica
Denmark	Peru
Sweden	Taiwan
France	South Korea
Ireland	El Salvador
Norway	Thailand

AN INTERCULTURAL CONVERSATION: INDIVIDUALISTIC AND COLLECTIVISTIC CULTURES

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 an individualistic culture whereas Korea is considered collectivistic. 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.[12]

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 creating team leaders within the individual sales groups. However, as Park Young Sam mentions, 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 collectivistic cultures, however, workers may be motivated by being a part of a cohesive and productive team.

Individualism and collectivism are terms that describe whole cultures. But cultures are not pure. As Triandis notes, members of collectivist cultures may practice individualistic tendencies while members of individualist cultures may value collectivist ideals. Joe Feldhausen notes, for example, that Denmark is a country with both collectivistic and individualistic tendencies. In Denmark, Feldhausen writes, individual freedom is nurtured through a devotion to established traditions and customs. Regarding income and social rank, Danes are staunchly egalitarian. At the same time, however, Danes considered themselves free to be nonconformist and to stand out from the group. In this way, Danes may be at the theoretical midpoint of the individualism and collectivism cultural continuum.[13]

PATTERNS OF INDIVIDUALISM AND COLLECTIVISM ACROSS THE UNITED STATES

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 that of the

rest of the United States with approximately 65 percent of its population coming from Asian cultures. Hence, much of the culture has collectivistic characteristics. Hawaii, too, 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.[14]

In their research Vandello and Cohen created an index of collectivism 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 people self-employed. 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 2.2).[15]

Table 2.2

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

Variations of individualism and collectivism can be seen within any culture. No culture is purely, and entirely, individualistic or collectivistic, for example. 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 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's degree of individualism-collectivism. When an individual carries individualistic tendencies, we call him or her idiocentric. When an individual carries collectivistic tendencies, we call that person 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 ingroup and enjoy behavior along ingroup 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 to idiocentrics, whose self-esteem is often based on getting ahead of others.[16]

William Gudykunst and his colleagues contend that another way to conceptualize individualism-collectivism at the individual level is to focus on self construals; that is, how the individual thinks of him- or herself. How individuals conceive of the self is one of the major determinants of their behavior. People use different construals of the self, including the independent self and the interdependent self. The independent self predominates in individualistic cultures and the interdependent self predominates in collectivistic cultures.[17]

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. Where individualists are taught to compete, the collectivist learns to cooperate. To be sure, individualistic cultures value and reward successful competition. 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 one aspires to. Collectivistic cultures, on the other hand, stress harmony and cooperation. Collectivists strive for the approval of the ingroup, 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."[18]

Markus and Kitayama write that in individualistic cultures how people see themselves privately is how they present themselves publicly. One's intrapersonal concept (e.g., "I am scholarly," "I am trustworthy," "I am principled") is seen in the individualist's public behavior. The collectivist, however, may have an inconsistent public and private self. Collectivists are likely to behave publicly according to the ingroup's norm regardless of their personal attitudes. The collectivist's self-esteem may depend on whether he or she can fit in and be part of a relevant, ongoing relationship with other group members. Collectivists see themselves as interdependent with others.[19]

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. Individualist parents encourage their children to be unique, express themselves, and be independent. The children of individualist parents understand that they are to leave home once they reach a certain age or education level. In fact, it is thought of as odd or unusual if children past the age of 21 or so 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 family rank is often determined by sex and age.[20]

Collectivists are more conscious of ingroup/outgroup 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 ingroup 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 ingroups and outgroups. For example, collectivists are likely to use the equality norm (i.e., equal distribution of resources) with ingroup members and the equity norm (i.e., unequal distribution of resources) with outgroup members.[21]

Individualism and collectivism are multidimensional. No single attribute is sufficient to classify a person as individualist or collectivist. That one or another culture may be more or less individualistic or collectivistic does not mean that it cannot share with another culture similar values related to other things. As Schwartz notes, wisdom, broad-mindedness, and inner harmony

serve both personal and ingroup interests. Cultures that are considered collectivistic may have values that are collective but are not those of the ingroup. For example, equality for all, social justice, preserving the natural environment, and world peace are values that serve the larger cultural milieu and society, not only the ingroup.[22]

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 ingroup 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.[23]

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 with 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 the self is seen as different from and perhaps unequal with 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.[24]

Horizontal collectivism is the cultural orientation where the individual sees the self as a member of an ingroup whose members are similar to each other. 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 ingroup but the members are different from each other, 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.

Measuring Individualism-Collectivism. Cross-cultural researchers have spent considerable efforts in developing instruments designed to measure one's relative degree of horizontal and vertical individualism-collectivism. Presented below is an instrument designed by Harry Triandis and his colleagues.[25]

SELF-ASSESSMENT 2.1

Below are 32 statements designed to assess your attitudes and beliefs about your-self. There are no right or wrong answers and some of the statements are similar to others. In the space to the left of each item, indicate the degree to which you either strongly agree or strongly disagree. If you are unsure or think that an item does not apply to you, enter a 5 in the blank. In short, use this key:

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

1. _____ I often do "my own thing."

2. _____ One should live one's life independently of others.

3. _____ I like my privacy.

4. _____ I prefer to be direct and forthright when discussing with other people.

5. _____ I am a unique individual.

6. _____ What happens to me is my own doing.

7. _____ When I succeed, it is usually because of my abilities.

8. _____ I enjoy being unique and different from others in many ways.

9. _____ It annoys me when other people perform better than I do.

10. _____ Competition is the law of nature.

11. _____ When another person does better than I do, I get tense and aroused.

12. _____ Without competition it is not possible to have a good society.

13. _____ Winning is everything.

14. _____ It is important that I do my job better than others.

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

16. _____ Some people emphasize winning; I'm one of them.

17. _____ The well-being of my co-workers is important to me.

18. _____ If a co-worker were to get a prize, I would feel proud.

19. _____ If a relative were in financial difficulty, I would help within my means.

20. _____ It is important to maintain harmony within my group.

21. _____ I like sharing little things with my neighbors.

22. _____ I feel good when I cooperate with others.

23. _____ My happiness depends very much on the happiness of those around me.

24. _____ To me, pleasure is spending time with others.

25. _____ I would sacrifice an activity I enjoy very much if my family did not approve of it.

26. _____ I would do what pleased my family, even if I detested that activity.

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

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

29. _____ Children should be taught to place duty before pleasure.

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

31. _____ We should keep our aging parents with us at home.

32. _____ Children should feel honored if their parents receive a distinguished award.

Scoring:

1. Add your responses for items 1 through 8. This is your Horizontal Individualism Score.

2. Add your responses for items 9 through 16. This is your Vertical Individualism Score.

3. Add your responses for items 17 through 24. This is your Horizontal Collectivism Score.

4. Add your responses for items 25 through 32. This is your Vertical Collectivism Score.

Alternative Scoring Method:

1. Add your responses for items 1 through 16. This is your Individualism score.

2. Add your responses for items 17 through 32. This is your Collectivism score.

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.[26]

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 have precedence over individual goals, values that serve the ingroup 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 than the collective self *across all cultures.* 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., United States, Canada, Great Britain) it is accepted and tolerated to show off one's success. In Eastern cultures (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 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.[27] 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.[28]

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, socio-relational, and perceptual environments (see Table 2.3). The cultural context includes, among myriad other variables, such features as

Table 2.3

Contextual Features

Culture (race, language)		
Physical Environment (office, church)	→ **Communication Decisions** →	**Message**
Social Relationship (superior/subordinate)		
Psychology (attitudes, emotions)	Verbal Choices	
	Nonverbal Choices	

individualism and collectivism. The physical environment includes the actual geographical location of the interaction (e.g., office, classroom, bedroom). The socio-relational 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. *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 will 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.[29]

Like individualism and collectivism, high-low context is best conceptualized along a cultural continuum (see Figure 2.3). No culture exists exclusively on one end of the continuum.

Characteristics of High- and Low-Context Cultures. Hall argues that the environmental, socio-relational, 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

Low Context ◀━━━━━━━━━━▶ High Context

Figure 2.3

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, socio-relational, and perceptual environment for information. Of particular importance is the social relationship between the inter-actants, 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.[30]

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, socio-relational, 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 are collectivistic, including China, Japan, North and South Korea, Vietnam, and many Arab and African cultures.[31]

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 explained. Users of elaborated codes are dependent upon 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.[32]

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.[33] 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.[34] 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 and/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.[35]

Japan is considered a high-context culture. Unlike a 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 (IT) 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 is indirect and subtle. In simple frequencies, Mr. Hutchinson uses four times as many words as Mr. Wong.[36]

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 email 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 email 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 communication styles. The instrument below is an adaptation of Gudykunst's scale.[37]

SELF-ASSESSMENT 2.2

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, 32. If your original score was 1, reverse it to a 9; if your original score was a 2, reverse it to an 8, etc. 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.

Source: Reprinted from Gudykunst, Matsumoto, Ting-Toomey, Nishida, Kim, & Heyman, "The Influence of Cultural Individualism-Collectivism, Self Construals, and Individual Values on Communication Styles Across Cultures," in *Human Communication Research, 22,* 1996, pp. 510-543. Reproduced with permission of Oxford University Press, Inc. via Copyright Clearance Center.

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 differ-ent. 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 per-haps what guides cultural behavior more than anything else are 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.[38]

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 individual-ity will likely interact differently from people who strongly value collec-tivism. An understanding of cultural value systems can help to 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.[39] 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.[40]

Hsu's Postulates of Basic American Values. 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.[41]

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 upon 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 with 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 listing 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.[42]

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.
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.

The CCC analyzed the list, noting the interrelations and underlying dimensions among many of the 40 values. They then reduced the list to four basic factors, labeled Integration, Confucian Work Dynamic, Human-Heartedness, and Moral Discipline.

Integration	Confucian Work Dynamic	Human-Heartedness	Moral Discipline
Tolerance	Ordering relationships	Kindness	Moderation
Harmony	Thrift	Patience	Keeping disinterested
Solidarity	Persistence	Courtesy	Having few desires
Filial piety	Sense of shame	Righteousness	Adaptability
Trustworthiness	Reciprocation	Patriotism	Prudence
Contentedness	Personal steadiness		
Conservative	Protecting your "face"		
Intimate friend	Respect for tradition		
Chastity in women			
Noncompetitiveness			

The CCC then asked people in 22 different cultures to rate the importance of the values.[43]

Cultures That Value Integration	Cultures That Value Confucian Work Dynamic
W. Germany	Hong Kong
Netherlands	Taiwan
Japan	Japan
New Zealand	S. Korea
Australia	Brazil
England	India
Brazil	Thailand
Sweden	Singapore
Canada	Netherlands
USA	Bangladesh

Cultures That Value Human-Heartedness	Cultures That Value Moral Discipline
Japan	Philippines
Philippines	S. Korea
Canada	Poland
Hong Kong	Pakistan
England	Japan
USA	W. Germany
Zimbabwe	India
New Zealand	Taiwan
Australia	Thailand
Singapore	Hong Kong

02-Neuliep (4849).qxd 11/19/2005 3:25 PM Page 69

Schwartz's Universal Values. Shalom Schwartz and his colleagues
have studied values across cultures. Schwartz's goal is to create a compre-
hensive 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 repre-
sent goals and/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. Based on these three universal human requirements, Schwartz
derived eleven distinct motivational types of values. 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 spe-
cific values used to measure the motivational type are in parentheses.[44]

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 relation-
ships. (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)

Kluckhohn and Strodbeck's Value Orientations. In the early 1960s, Florence Kluckhohn and Fred Strodbeck 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 Strodbeck created five sets of value orientations.[45] 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: self, family, society, human nature, nature, and the supernatural.[46]

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 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 top or on the bottom, the individual experiences intense emotions. Hsu contends

Table 2.4

	Individualistic Low Context		*Collectivistic High Context*
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

(Continued)

Table 2.4 (Continued)

	Individualistic Low Context		*Collectivistic High Context*
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
SUPERNATURAL			
1. Relationship between Human 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

that strong emotions are unavoidable because they are concentrated in one individual. The Chinese, however, are interdependent with others, where 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.[47]

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 business 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.[48]

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. Non-Western cultures emphasize being, a form of self-actualization. Life is an organic whole; it is human to embrace life and to become one with the universe and oneself.[49]

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 one's family lineage through the male head of the household. A Nigerian is known by his or her family lineage and may have privileges and responsibility 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 practiced polygamy. Wives are often acquired through the payment of a bride price to the bride's parents.[50]

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 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 the mother to

recognize their responsibilities as men and women. A boy may be sent to work in the fields as early as five 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.[51]

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 obligated.[52]

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 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.[53]

An intermediary is a go-between; intermediaries are more common in collectivistic than individualistic cultures. Many Chinese prefer to work through an intermediary. According to De Menthe, 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. The more face a person has, the more he/she can "buy" with it. De Menthe writes that, like a checking account, *mian-zi* can be overdrawn, and people are expected to balance their accounts. 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 interaction with others. Intermediaries are therefore essential in both personal and business relationships.[54]

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 unalienable 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."[55]

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 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 like that of a machine or clock. The brain, for example, is explained in computer analogies. Models of DNA look like double helixes. The organic orientation likens nature to that of a plant, where nature is seen as an organic whole that is interdependent with all other natural forces.[56]

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 a (perhaps vain) attempt to communicate with extraterrestrials. Most Western cultures believe that the order of the cosmos is knowable. Conversely, other cultures see 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.[57]

The organization of the value orientations presented above are neither mutually exclusive nor exhaustive. They are representative of the kinds of

values held by cultures and the difference 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 upon 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 its 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."[58] Power distance can be seen in families, bureaucracies, and even in friendships. For example, inequality of power within organizations is inevitable and desirable in many cases for organizations to function effectively. 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 and more powerful people. In cultures with small power distance (e.g., United States, Canada, Austria), family members are generally treated as equal and familial decisions are reached democratically. According to Hofstede, in low 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 and "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

02-Neuliep (4849).qxd 11/19/2005 3:25 PM Page 77

The Cultural Context ▶ 77

Figure 2.4   In many cultures, there is a strict hierarchy among family members

tend to resent those whose power is decreed by birth or wealth (i.e., positional power).[59]

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 (see Figure 2.4). In larger power distance cultures (e.g., 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. In educational settings, teachers are treated as parents, with respect and honor, especially older teachers. Students who disobey may by punished severely. In the workplace, power is usually centralized where 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.[60]

Table 2.5

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

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 be higher power distance (see Table 2.5). As the size of any group increases, it becomes unwieldy and difficult to manage informally.[61]

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.

Measuring Power Distance

SELF-ASSESSMENT 2.3

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 response. 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, then sum your 10 responses. This sum is your power distance score. Lower scores equal lower power distance.

Source: Reproduced by permission. Copyright © Geert Hofstede.

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 low 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.

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 higher 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 low power distance values. 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 outgroup disagreements; the smaller the power distance, the more likely managers are to ask peers to handle disagreements; and the smaller the power distance, the more likely the manager is 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.

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.[62]

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 (high power distance).[63]

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.[64]

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 of 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 northern-most 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 of 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 low 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, socio-relational, 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.[65]

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.[66]

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 a need 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.[67]

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 avoiding 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
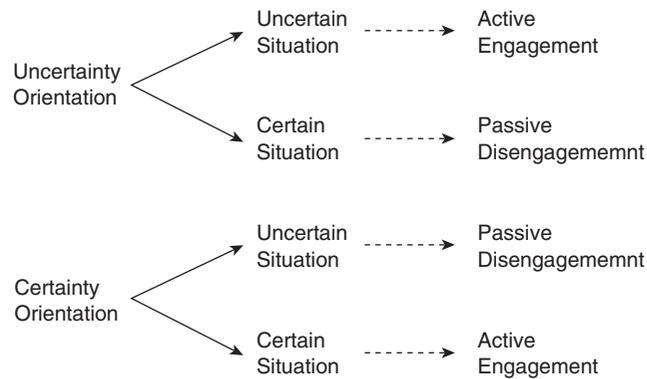
Figure 2.5

all the right answers. On the job, time is money, where punctuality and precision are expected. There is generally a resistance to innovative ideas, and workers are motivated by job security.[68]

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 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 and/or on heuristic devices more than 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 uncertainty-oriented persons will be actively engaged in the situation. Certainty-oriented

Table 2.6

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

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.[69]

AN INTERCULTURAL CONVERSATION: WEAK AND STRONG UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE

There are any number of ways one's uncertainty avoidance orientation may manifest itself in interaction. 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 are 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 of 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