

Classifying Cultures

John Hooker

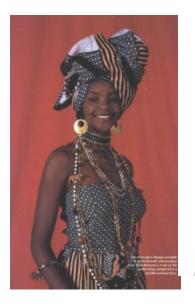
Carnegie Mellon University

CMU Osher Course September 2023



It's not about food, language, dress, holidays, etc.











What if all Chinese ate Sauerbraten and Käsespätzle





...rather than jiǎo zi and bāo zi?







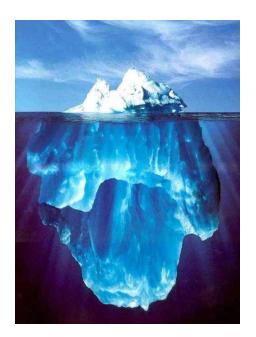
It would be the same culture!





- Culture is the thought system we live in.
 - Culture determines our deepest assumptions, most of which we are **not even aware of**.
 - Like an iceberg, culture lies mostly **beneath the surface**.







- Culture is not ethnic identity.
 - An ethnic group may describe itself in ways that are only incidental to the underlying culture.
 - Often, when the group is already losing its cultural distinctiveness.
 - An ethnic group need **not be a subculture** but may only have a common national origin.





Special note

No judgments.

- The aim here is **not** to judge cultures as **good** or **bad**.
- We claim only that they are different.
- One can **describe** a culture without implying a judgment.





Special note

No stereotyping.

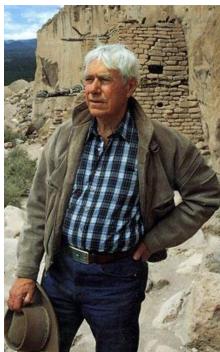
- **Culture** is **not about personalities**.
- It does **not** "stereotype" individuals.
- Every culture contains the **full range** of personalities.
 - Some Swedes love noisy parties.
 - Some Brazilians hate Carnaval.
- Culture is about the **system** in which these personalities fit (or don't fit).





Sources

- Intellectual background.
 - Many of the ideas presented here are based on the work of Edward T. Hall and Geert Hofstede

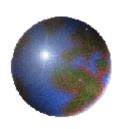


1914-2009

Geert Hofstede 1928-2020

Edward T. Hall





Relationships vs. Rules



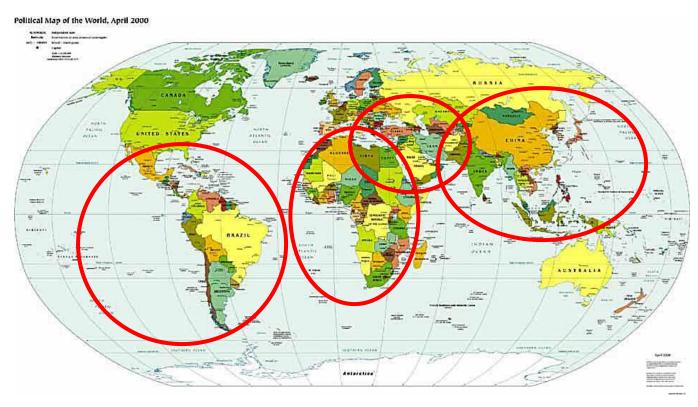
Two types of cultures

- There are 5000+ cultures in the world, all very different.
- But they can be classified roughly as:
 - relationship-based
 - rule-based.
- Note color code:
 - Red vs blue

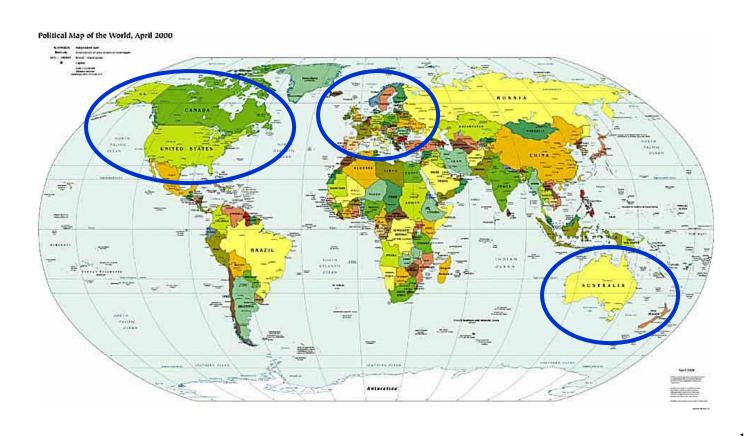




- * Relationship-based = life is organized primarily around **personal relationships**.
 - Africa, Asia, Middle East, South America

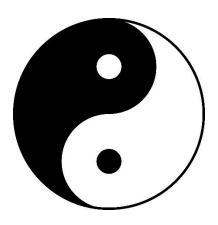


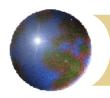
- * Rule-based = life is organized primarily by rules.
 - Australia, Europe, North America





- No culture is purely rule-based or relationship-based.
 - Nonetheless, one system tends to dominate.





Getting things done

- Work through personal connections
- Go by the **book**

Business

- It's all about forming a **relationship**.
- Trust the **person**, not the system.
- It's all about making deals.
- Rely on the **system** to enforce the deal.







Traffic

- Negotiate your way through it.
- Follow traffic laws.



Intersection in Varanasi, India



Concept of authority.

- Authority rests in the person.
- Authority derives from rules.



Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud



Supreme Law of the Land U.S. Constitution



- China & U.S.
 - China: strongly relationship-based



U.S.: strongly rule-based





Many cultural traits correlate with the rule-based, relationship-based distinction.

Relationship-Based	Rule-Based
Polychronic	Monochronic
High power distance*	Low power distance*
Shame-based	Guilt-based
High context	Low context
Collectivist*	Individualist*
Masculine*	Feminine*
Uncertainty tolerant*	Uncertainty avoiding*
Dionysian	Apollonian

^{*}Hofstede's categories



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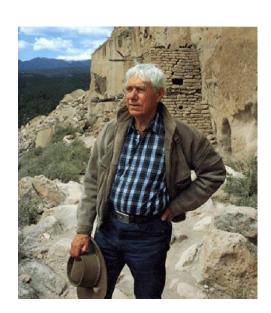
^{*}Hofstede's categories



Monochronic and polychronic

- A culture's sense of **time** affects every aspect of daily life.
 - Edward Hall classified cultures as monochronic and polychronic.

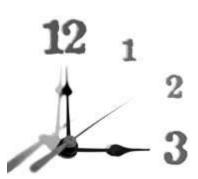






Monochronic and polychronic

- Monochronic cultures one thing at a time.
 - People like to **finish one task before moving to another**and are generally **punctual**.
 - Rule-based cultures are generally monochronic.
 - U.S. is strongly monochronic.





Monochronic and polychronic

- Polychronic cultures— juggling tasks.
 - People are comfortable with being involved in several tasks at once.
 - Relationship-based cultures are polychronic.
 - Punctually generally **not important**.
 - Except in Japan, Singapore and (to some extent)
 China.





Monochronic cultures

People organize and structure time.

Time is partitioned into **intervals**, each devoted to one task.

Appointments are made and punctuality important.

Orderly **queues** form.





Monochronic cultures

- Time is a measurable substance.
 - It can be spent, saved, wasted.
 - Idleness wastes time.
 - Activity **fills time**.
 - Having to wait is boring.





Monochronic cultures

- Travel arrangements.
 - Made far in advance.
 - E.g., Scandinavia
- Deadlines.
 - Time is money.
 - People get **nervous** and **speed up** as the deadline approaches.







Polychronic cultures

- People work on several tasks at once.
 - You may be **kept waiting** 45 minutes for an appointment.
 - But don't keep the boss waiting!
 - Clerk may serve3 or 4 people at once.
 - No orderly queues, except at international airports, hotels, etc.





Polychronic cultures

- Time is **not measured**.
 - Idleness stops time.
 - Activity makes time.
 - Having to wait is no big deal.







Polychronic cultures

- Travel arrangements.
 - Made at the last minute.
 - E.g., India.
- Deadlines.
 - People switch to another task when delayed.
 - No one speeds up as the deadline approaches.





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Power distance

- Power distance is the degree to which less powerful people accept their subordinate position.
 - Fundamental problem: how do people get power?
 - At some point, others must **grant** them power.





- Relationship-based countries tend to be **high** power distance.
 - Behavior is regulated by **people** with authority.
 - Rules are legitimated and enforced by authority figures.
 - Leaders are expected to be wise and caring.
 - Example: Deng Xiaoping



Deng Xiaoping Chinese paramount leader 1978-1989



- Rule-based countries tend to be **low** power distance.
 - People respect the **rules** more than superiors.
 - Examples: Sweden & U.S.



Karl XVI Gustaf Swedish King since 1973



High power distance:

- Children obey and respect parents, teachers.
- Employees are **reluctant to challenge** the boss or discuss problems.
- Ideal boss is benevolent but authoritarian.
- Possibly large differences in salary/skills.
- Possibly class differences, limited upward mobility.
- Because authority must reside in the **person**, certain individuals have authority based on who they are.



Low power distance:

- Children are allowed to **contradict** their parents.
- **Two-way** discussion in classroom.
- **Discipline** may be a problem; parents side with child rather than teacher.
- No corporal punishment.
- Positions of authority are typically **temporary** and **earned** in some way.





Low power distance:

- Consultative management.
- Employees bring **concerns** and grievances to the boss.
- Ideal boss inspires workers.
- Possibly smaller salary differences; workers may resent executive perks.
 - But... high power distance in much of **U.S. business**
 - Salary & offices in U.S. and Scandinavia





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Shame and guilt

Shame and guilt are mechanisms for enforcing behavior norms.







Shame and guilt

- Relationship-based cultures enforce behavior norms by shame.
 - Loss of face very important in China
 - Humiliation.
 - Punishment on the spot.
 - Direct and constant supervision.



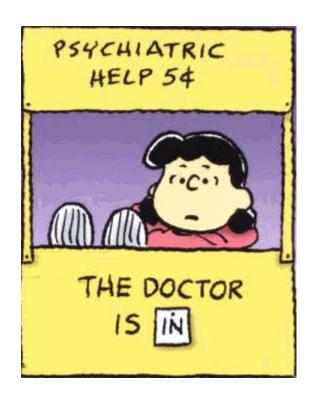
Shame and guilt

- Key point for shame-based cultures:
 - Failure to supervise **gives permission** to break the "rules."
 - Exam proctoring.





- Guilt is more important in rule-based cultures.
 - Guilt encourages obedience to rules without supervision.
 - But it may be a poor motivator and carry high psychological cost.
 - Ein gutes Gewissen ist an sanftes Ruhekissen.
 - Guilt is **reinforced** by fear of punishment.
 - Support for **monochronic** time consciousness.





Humor...

- Based on **jokes** and **irony** in guilt-based cultures.
 - Relief from rules, logic
- Based on **amusement** in shame-based cultures.
 - Diversion from daily routine.







Mr. Bean breaking the rules



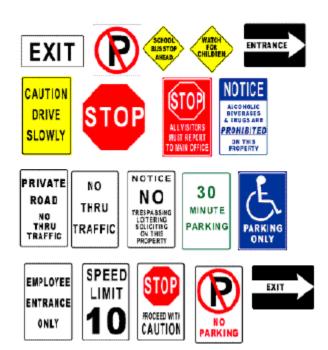
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- In low-context cultures,
 - There any many signs, timetables, maps.
 - **Contracts** are written, long, and detailed.
 - Fixed once signed.
 - Disputes resolved by lawsuits.
 - People pay attention to written rules.
 - Example: restroom sign.
 - Extreme example: **U.S.**





- In high-context cultures,
 - People already know what to do.
 - **Contracts** are vague, verbal, or nonexistent.
 - Agreements evolve with the situation.
 - Legal system weak.
 - Disputes resolved by negotiation.
 - Contracts important in Middle East.
 - People may not pay attention to written rules or memos.
 - Transparency is not important
 - Decisions are made behind the scenes, then announced.



- In low-context cultures,
 - Disagreements are resolved by open discussion.
 - It is OK to say "no".
 - Employees can express disagreement with company policy.
 - Transparency is very important
 - Extreme example: **U.S.**
 - Decisions are often made, defended, and attacked in public.





- In high-context cultures,
 - Communication is indirect.
 - One rarely says "no," may say "yes" to be polite.
 - It may be improper to **criticize company policy** in the presence of the boss.





- First rule of international business:
 - In a low-context culture,

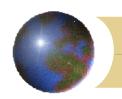
Nothing is agreed upon unless it is part of the contract.



In a **high-context culture**,

Nothing is agreed upon unless it is part of the relationship.





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Collectivist cultures

- Primary loyalty is to the **group**.
 - Usually the **family**, sometimes the village, company, or nation.
- People rely on the **group** for support, security, predictability.
 - In China, loyalty is to **family, family, family**.





Collectivist cultures

- Focus on **cooperation**
 - But masculine cultures can be very competitive outside the loyalty group.
 - ...as in China, where business is highly competitive
 - ...but personal ambition is also related to honoring the family





Individualist cultures

- Primary loyalty is to **oneself**.
 - People are held **individually responsible** for their own welfare.
 - People are expected to show individual initiative.
- People rely on **themselves** and an impersonal **system** for support, security, predictability.
 - Extreme example: **U.S.**
 - We even blame individuals for illness.





- Individualist cultures
 - Focus on **competition**.
 - An article of faith in **U.S.**
 - Although cooperation can be important in feminine individualist cultures, e.g. Scandinavia





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Masculine/feminine

The distinction can be understood in two ways...





Masculine/feminine

- Attitude toward masculine values.
 - Masculine: Men are expected to be tough.
 - Feminine: Men & women more similar.



- Attitude toward competition.
 - Masculine: competition valued.
 - Feminine: cooperation valued.





Masculine values

Masculine

Feminine

Masculine

Competitiiveness Feminine Mascu

Japan, China U.S. , U.K., Ireland Philippines India	
East African cultures Arab cultures Eastern Slavic cultures Machismo cultures	Scandinavia Western Slavic cultures Thailand



Case study

Scandinavia

- Feminine culture
 - Men and women very **similar**
 - Emphasis on cooperation.
 - Negotiation is **not** a poker game...
 show all your cards.

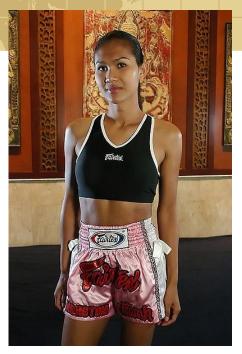




Case study

Thailand

- Feminine culture?
 - 3rd gender (or transgender) individuals are accepted to some degree
 - Velvet coups d'état.



Nong Tum, well-known kathoey



Thai soldier during 2006 military coup



But... military crackdown on protestors in Bangkok, May 2010



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Attitudes toward unpredictability in life...





- Uncertainty tolerant:
 - Willing to take risks.
 - Entrepreneurial in business.
 - Comfortable with travel, relocation.



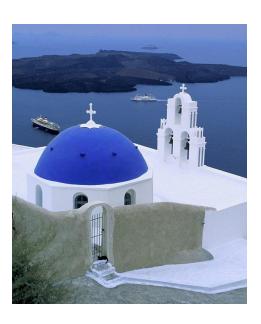


- Uncertainty avoiding:
 - Prefer familiar surroundings.
 - Risk-averse in business.
 - Dysfunctional bureaucracy serves as ritual.





- Some uncertainty avoiding cultures:
 - Greece.
 - Latin America.
 - Western Slavic cultures.
 - Belgium.
 - France.





- Some uncertainty tolerant cultures:
 - ₩ U.K.
 - **U.S.**
 - **China**
 - Especially Hong Kong & coastal provinces
 - Singapore





- Case study: United Kingdom
 - Masculine culture
 - Militaristic
 - Stiff upper lip
 - Competitive
 - Uncertainty tolerant culture
 - Love to travel, resettle anywhere.
 - Former British colonies tend to be more livable than most, because the British lived there themselves.
 - Former colonies include U.S., Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Hong Kong, Kenya, Zimbabwe.





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- Introduced by Friedrich Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy*.
 - To describe two sides of classical Greek culture





- Anthropologist Ruth Benedict used the distinction to describe native American cultures.
 - Patterns of Culture (1934).
 - Pueblo vs. Mandan (e.g.)
 - Pueblo: orderly lifestyle
 - Mandan: extreme experience
 - Two ways of handling stress, uncertainty, joy, and grief.







Funeral, Norway Apollonian



Funeral, Palestine Dionysian

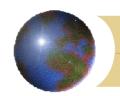


U.S. and China?

- **U.S.**: Extroversion is highly valued
 - which can encourage Dionysian behavior
- **China**: Introversion is acceptable
 - but Apollonian character more evident in general aversion to showing emotion with colleagues, especially anger
 - Note that showing emotion is acceptable in masculine Japan to express regret and restore harmony.







Questions?

Comments?

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日 Zapytaj Sor
Acyy Poser Iarr Pergunte
お願いします Ask Chiedi
Jautāt Kérdezd meg Kysy
Pitajte 부탁드립니다 (Yraag
ローロ Pωτήστε Spør
Питаjте
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Hofstede's Classification

- The best known classification.
 - From Geert Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* (3rd ed. 2010).
 - Based on a worldwide survey of employees of IBM subsidiaries in 50 countries.



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Hofstede's Classification

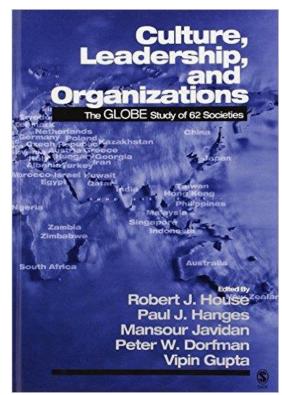
- The best known classification.
 - From Geert Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* (3rd ed. 2010).
 - Based on a worldwide survey of employees of IBM subsidiaries in 50 countries.
 - Often covered in executive workshops.
 - See as legitimate in the West due to its basis in quantifiable responses to surveys.

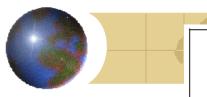




Hofstede's Classification

- More recent surveys in *Culture, Leadership, and Organizations: The GLOBE Study of 62 Societies*.
 - These are summarized here, in case you are curious.
 - Hofstede's original classification seems more useful.





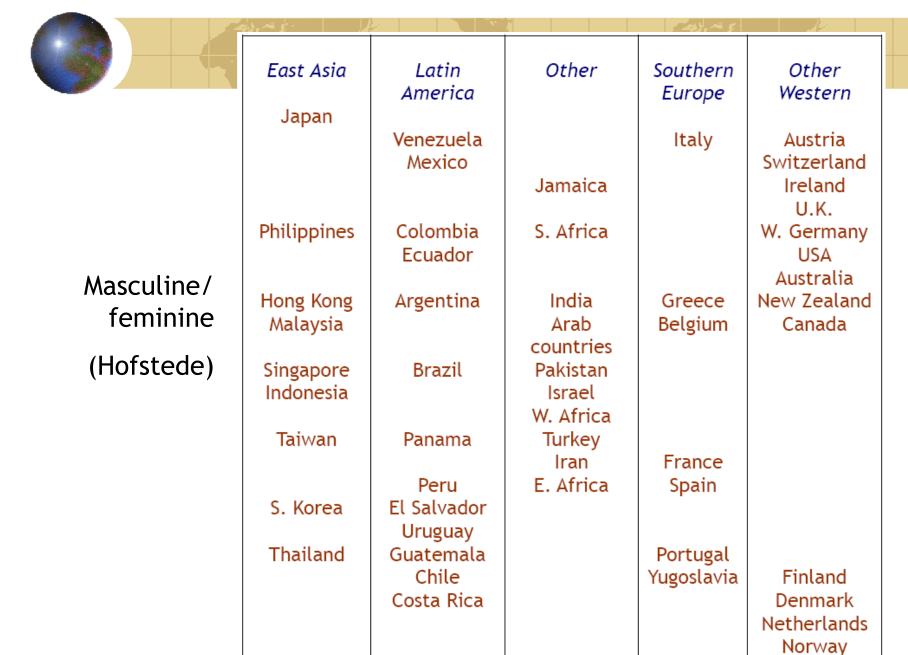
Power Distance (Hofstede)

4	East Asia	Latin America	Other	Southern Europe	Other Western
	Malaysia Philippines	Guatemala Panama Mexico Venezuela	Arab countries		
	Indonesia	Ecuador	India		
	Singapore	Brazil	West Africa	Yugoslavia	
	Hong Kong	Colombia			France
		El Salvador	Turkey		
	·	Peru	East Africa	Belgium	
	Thailand	Chile		Portugal	
	S. Korea Taiwan	Uruguay	Iran Pakistan	Greece	
	Japan	Argentina	S. Africa	Spain Italy	
	Зарап	Argentina	Jamaica	icaty	USA
			Jamaica		Canada
					Netherlands
		Costa Rica			Australia
					W. Germany
					U.K.
					Switzerland
					Finland
					Norway Sweden
					Ireland
					New Zealand
			Israel		Denmark
					Austria



Collectivism (Hofstede)

East Asia	Latin America	Other	Southern Europe	Other Western
Indonesia Taiwan S. Korea Thailand Singapore	Guatemala Ecuador Panama Venezuela Colombia Costa Rica Peru El Salvador Chile	Pakistan W. Africa		
Hong Kong	Cinc	W. Allied		
Malaysia Philippines Japan	Mexico Uruguay Brazil Argentina	E. Africa Turkey Arab countries Jamaica Iran	Portugal Yugoslavia Greece	
Supuri	Argentina	India	Spain	
		Israel S. Africa		Austria Finland
				W. Germany Switzerland Norway
			France	Ireland Sweden
			Belgium	Denmark
			Italy	New Zealand Netherlands
				Canada
				U.K. Australia
				USA

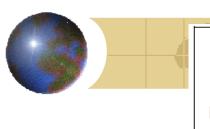


Sweden

	_

	East Asia	Latin America	Other	Southern Europe	Other Western
Uncortainty	Japan	Guatemala Uruguay El Salvador Peru Chile Costa Rica Panama		Greece Portugal Belgium Yugoslavia France Spain	
Uncertainty avoidance	S. Korea	Argentina	Turkey		
avoraanee		Colombia Venezuela	Israel		
(Hofstede)	Taiwan Thailand Indonesia	Brazil Ecuador	Pakistan Arab countries Iran W. Africa E. Africa S. Africa	Italy	Austria W. Germany Finland Switzerland Netherlands Australia Norway New Zealand Canada
	Philippines Malaysia		India		USA U.K.
	Hong Kong				Ireland Sweden
	Singapore		Jamaica		Denmark

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	East Asia	Latin America	Other	Southern & Eastern Europe	Other Western
			Morocco	•	
		El Salvador	Nigeria		
	Thailand		Zimbabwe		
	S. Korea	Argentina Guatemala	Zimbabwe		
		Ecuador	Turkey	E. Germany	
		Colombia		Hungary	
			India	Spain	
Day			Russia		
Power	Philippines		Iran	Portugal	
Distance				Italy	
Distance		Venezuela		Greece	
(CLODE)		Brazil	Zambia	Slovenia	
(GLOBE)		Drazit	Kazakhstan	Stoverna	
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	Japan		Kuwait	Poland	Ireland
	China				
	Singapore				
	Hong Kong		Egypt		Austria
					Switzerland
					Sweden
					Canada
		Costa Rica	Qatar		Australia
		Bolivia	Israel	Albania	Netherlands
			S. Africa (black)		Denmark
			, ,		



In-group Collectivism (GLOBE)

}					
	East Asia	Latin America	Other	Southern & Eastern Europe	Other Western
	Philippines		Georgia Iran India	Lurope	
			Turkey		
	China	Ecuador	Morocco Zambia		
	China	Colombia	Zambia Kuwait	Albania	
	Thailand	Mexico	Navare	Atbania	
	Indonesia		Egypt		
	Singapore	Guatemala	Russia		
	Taiwan S. Korea	Venezuela	Zimbabwe	Poland	
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		El Salvador		Slovenia	
	Hong Kong	Costa Rica	Kazakhstan	Greece	Ireland
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					England
					Finland
					W. Germany
					Switzerland Netherlands
					New Zealand
					Sweden
					Denmark

Male domination (GLOBE)

East Asia	Latin America	Other	Southern & Eastern	Other Western
S. Korea		Kuwait	Europe	
3. Noi ea		Egypt		
		Morocco		
		Zambia		
		Turkey		
		India	_	Switzerland
		Iran	Spain	
	Guatemala	Nigeria		
China	Ecuador	Zimbabwe	E. Germany	Austria
Taiwan Japan	El Salvador	Israel	W. Germany	Ireland
Indonesia	Brazil	S. Africa (white)	Italy	New Zealand
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Hong Kong	Argentina		Greece	Australia
Malaysia	Bolivia	Georgia		Netherlands
	Costa Rica			
	Venezuela	Qatar	_	
Philippines	Mexico	S. Africa (black)	France	
Singapore	Colombia		Portugal	England
		1/	Albania	Canada
		Kazakhstan	Classes!-	Sweden
		Namibia	Slovenia	Denmark
		Russia	Poland	
			Hungary	

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	East Asia	Latin	Other	Southern &	Other
		America		Eastern	Western
				Europe	
			Nigeria	Albania	
				Hungary	
	Hong Kong	El Salvador	S. Africa (white)	E. Germany	Austria
				Greece	W. Germany
			Turkey		USA
	6 1/		Morocco		Switzerland
Assertiveness	S. Korea	Mexico	Kazakhstan	Spain	Mathada a
(CLODE)		Venezuela	S. Africa (black)		Netherlands
(GLOBE)		Argentina Brazil	Israel		Australia
	Singapore	Colombia	Georgia	France	England
	Jiligapore	Ecuador	Qatar	Trance	Liigianu
		Ledadoi	Zambia	Italy	
			Zimbabwe	Poland	Canada
	Philippines		Iran	Slovenia	Ireland
	Taiwan		Namibia	515 / 51116	
	Malaysia	Guatemala	Egypt		
	Indonesia		371		Finland
	China	Bolivia			Denmark
		Costa Rica	India		
	Thailand		Russia	Portugal	
	Japan		Kuwait		New Zealand
					Sweden

Performance
oriented
(GLOBE)

East Asia	Latin America	Other	Southern & Eastern	Other Western
	Ecuador Colombia	Philippines	Europe	USA Canada Ireland
Indonesia	Brazil	Israel	E. Germany Spain	England Australia New Zealand
	El Salvador Argentina		Italy	Austria
	Argentina	Zimbabwe	Portugal	
	Costa Rica	Namibia	Hungary	
Singapore	Mexico			
Malaysia	Guatemala	Zambia		W. Germany
	Venezuela	Kuwait		Switzerland
	Venezuela Bolivia	S. Africa (white)		Denmark Finland
Thailand	Bottvia	Nigeria		Tintana
		Kazakhstan		Sweden
		India		Netherlands
		Georgia		
Hong Vong		Russia	Poland	
Hong Kong		Turkey Egypt	Greece	
Japan		LSypt	Slovenia	
Taiwan				
China		Iran	Albania	
S. Korea		S. Africa (black)	_	
		Morocco	France	
		Qatar		84

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Uncertainty avoidance conceived as orderliness and/or high context and/or high power distance (GLOBE)

East Asia	Latin America	Other	Southern Europe	Other Western
Singapore				Switzerland Sweden Denmark
China Malaysia		S. Africa (black)	E. Germany	W. Germany Austria Finland New Zealand Netherlands England
Taiwan		3. Affica (black)	Albania France	Canada Australia
Hong Kong		Nigeria Kuwait		Ireland
Indonesia	Mexico	Namibia Zimbabwe India		USA
Japan		Zambia S. Africa (white) Egypt Israel		OSA .
Thailand		Qatar	Spain	
Philippines	Costa Rica	-	Portugal Italy	
	Ecuador	Iran Kazakhstan	Slovenia	
	Argentina	Morocco		
	El Salvador Brazil	Turkey	Poland	
S. Korea	Colombia Venezuela Bolivia	Georgia	Greece	
	Guatemala	Russia	Hungary	8