

# Communication Between Cultures

7th ed.

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# Chapter 5 Overview

## Shaping interpretations of reality: cultural values

- **Perception defined**
- **Perception and culture, beliefs and values**
- **Dominant U.S. cultural patterns**
- **Cultural value orientations**

# Perception defined

**The means by which you make sense of your physical and social world**

*The reality that's contained within us: symbols, things, people, ideas, events, ideologies, faith*

Culture influences perception = cultural patterns:

- **Perception selective**

*What's allowed is determined by culture*

- **Perception learned**

*Taught by culture*

# Beliefs defined

**Foundations of truth; storage system for content of past experiences  
(thoughts, memories, interpretations of events)**

*Cultures have different realities, belief systems*

## Beliefs form basis of values

**Values = shared ideas of what's true, right, beautiful**

*Underline cultural patterns and guide society*

*Translate into action: Belief > Value > Attitude > Behavior*

*Inform a culture of what's normal by identifying  
good/bad, right/wrong, worth study, worth protecting*

*Classified as primary, secondary, tertiary*

# Cultural Patterns

- *are integrated*

*values act in concert with other values*

- *are dynamic*

*cultures change, so do their values*

- *can be contradictory*

*standard of living disparity, racial prejudice*

# Dominant U.S. cultural patterns

## Individualism - aka freedom; cornerstone of American culture

*All values, rights, duties originate in individuals.*

*Self-reliance and separate identity key.*

*Whether sexual, social, or ethical, the “self” holds pivotal position.*

## Equal opportunity - all should have same opportunity to succeed

*Family relationships promote informality, equality over hierarchy; social status differences underplayed, noted indirectly, nonverbally.*

*Contradiction noted in inequalities; still, Americans strive for ideal of equal freedoms and access.*

## Science and technology - valued as essential to survival

*Tied to belief in ability to predict and control much of life.*

*Reflects respect for rationality, objectivity, empirical evidence and dismissal of fatalism, subjectivity, mysticism, intuition.*

# U.S. cultural patterns, continued

## Progress and change - devalue the status quo

*Americans innovate at faster rate than any other people.*

*View the environment as something to be conquered, tamed, harnessed for social, personal benefit.*

## Work and play - identity grounded in what a person does

*Voluntary idleness threatening, a damaging social condition.*

*Leisure is earned.*

## Competitive nature - life (work, interests) a game to win

*People and their product/output ranked, classified, graded, evaluated.*

*Encouraged among children, youth ... continues into work life.*

# Hofstede's four value dimensions

## Individualism/Collectivism

*Individualists emphasize:*

- *personal rights, responsibilities*
- *privacy, independence*
- *individual achievement*
- *self-expression*

*Collectivists emphasize:*

- *community, collaboration*
- *public good, harmony*
- *tradition/social norms*
- *maintaining face*

Uncertainty avoidance - extent to which people are made nervous by the unstructured, unclear, unpredictable

*High uncertainty avoidance: minimize uncertainty through structure, resistance to change*

*Low uncertainty avoidance: tolerant of the unusual, embrace difference/risk; self-reliant*

Power distance - preference for power in relationships, institutions, organizations

*High power distance: powerful and powerless far apart; social hierarchy prevalent*

*Low power distance: power holders and those affected by power significantly closer*

Masculinity/femininity - degree to which masculine or feminine traits valued

*Masculinity: assertiveness, ambition, competition, materialism; value what's big/strong/fast*

*Femininity: nurture, promote/stress sexual equality, people and the environment*



## Hofstede's additional value dimension

- added in response to criticism of Western bias in original work

### Long- and short-term orientation (aka 'Confucian Dynamism')

- (1) Long-term orientation values social order, long-range goals
- (2) Short-term orientation places low priority on status, tries to postpone old age, seeks quick gratification of needs

# Kluckhohns and Strodtbeck's value orientations

## Human nature orientation - different conceptions of evil, good and evil, good

- *In Taoism, forces in people and nature: yang (good) and yin (evil) cycle*
- *U.S. Puritan roots held view that people intrinsically evil; today, seen more as perfectible*
- *Muslim cultures view people as having penchant for evil, needing rescue, restriction*

*Social institutions (religion, politics) perfect/manage/monitor individuals*

## Person/nature orientation - humans subject to or having dominion over nature

*Cooperation with nature: associated with East Asians, life in harmony with nature*

*Control over nature: Western approach asserting nature can and should be mastered*

## Time orientation - value placed on past, present, future

*Past-oriented cultures place significance on prior events; resistance to change*

*Present-oriented cultures value here-and-now; see future as vague, ambiguous*

*Future-oriented cultures look forward to improved condition: Tomorrow is ours to win.*

Activity orientation: *Being- indulgence, living in the moment*  
*Being-in-becoming - development, more spiritual than material*  
*Doing - value accomplishments, rapid decisions/actions, expressive*

# Hall's high-context and low-context orientations

## Context defined

*The information that surrounds an event, inextricably bound up with the meaning of the event*

## High-context versus low-context

*Degree to which meaning comes from settings OR from words being exchanged*

*High-context communication* - *tuned in to nonverbal; indirect, implicit; information provided through inference, gestures, even silence; also conveyed through status, background, affiliations*

*Low-context communication* - *inherent to less homogenous populations lacking common experiences; the mass of information vested in explicit code; direct, rapid, louder speech*

# Face and Facework

## Face defined

*Self-image you want to project to other people*

## Facework defined

*Construction and communication of face*

*Priority in collectivist cultures where harmony (conflict avoidance) valued*

*Influenced by cultural values*

- *In Japan, involves honor, appearance of propriety, presence, and impact on others*
- *For Chinese, connected with social pride, dignity/honor, respect, prestige, avoiding shame/disgrace/mistrust*

Next ...

**Chapter 6:  
Language and culture:  
the essential partnership**

