

Cultural Basics

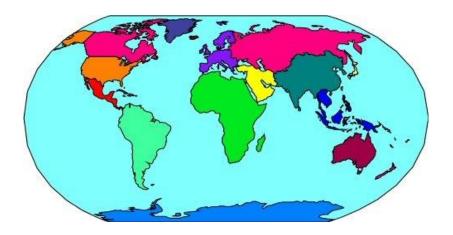
Understanding World Cultures Osher course, University of Pittsburgh, January 2024

John Hooker, Carnegie Mellon University, USA



Why understand world cultures?

- Cultures are fascinating.
 - **a** source of **wisdom** and **alternative perspectives** on life.
- Better understanding of world events.
- Richer travel experiences.
- Ability to relate to those from other cultures with sensitivity and respect.

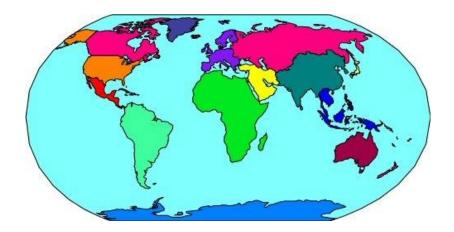




Why understand world cultures?

Cultures are different

- More so than our own culture leads us to think.
- Each has a thought system and logic of its own.

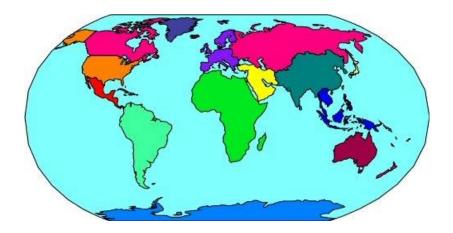




Course plan

Not a typical course in cultural anthropology

- Coverage of concepts most useful in practice.
- Focus on major national cultures we are likely to encounter.

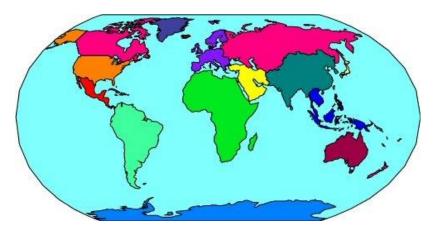




Course plan

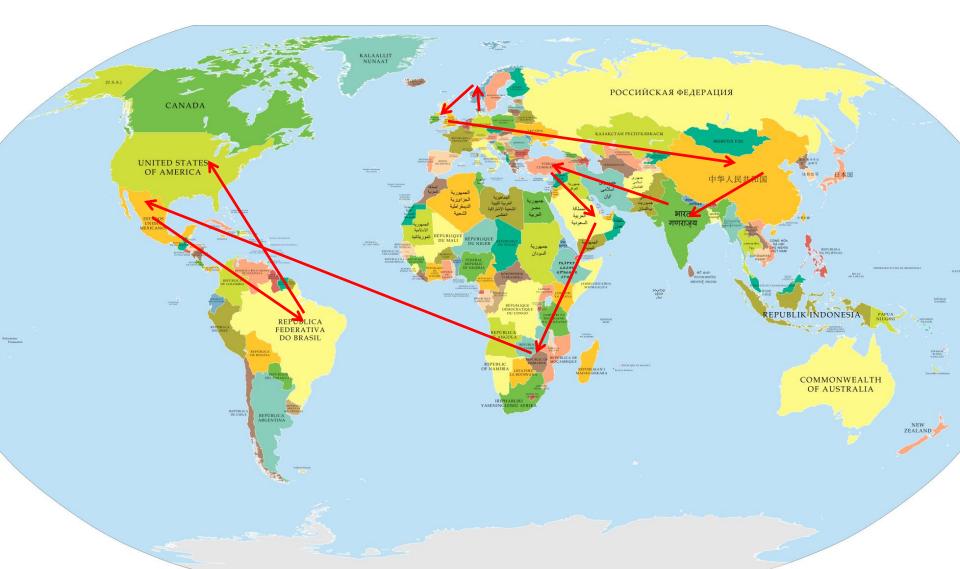
Not a typical course in cultural anthropology

- Coverage of concepts most useful in practice.
- Focus on major national cultures we are likely to encounter.
- Begin with basic concepts
- Then take a world tour
 - **Begin** with Western cultures
 - Strong emphasis on China
 - Loop back to U.S. through India, Middle East, Africa, Latin America.





Travel plan





What is culture?

It's not the food!

Nor fundamentally dress, customs, holidays, the arts, or even the language.











What is culture?

Culture is the thought system we live in.

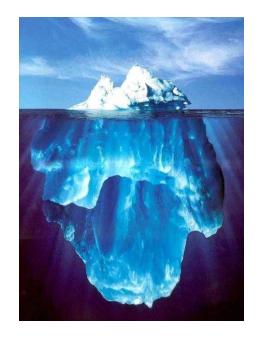
...and the practices that grow out of it.

It determines deepest assumptions

- most of which we are not even aware of.
 - Like an iceberg, culture lies mostly beneath the surface.

Culture is learned (cultivated)

...rather than genetically determined





What is culture?

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 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).





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.





Is the world moving toward a common culture?

Due to cheap air travel and information technology?





Is the world moving toward a common culture?

- Due to cheap air travel and information technology?
- NO.
- Relatively few people in the world travel internationally.
- Information technology reinforces cultural **divergence**.







- Satellite channels...
 - ...are easy to set up.
 - ...cater to every ethnic group.
 - 400+ Arabic language channels, for example.





Culturally-specific websites proliferate.

Google Konstant

 For example, Google search portals support 149 languages.

Google



Google







Social media are infamous for **isolating** groups in a cultural bubble.

The opposite of homogenization.



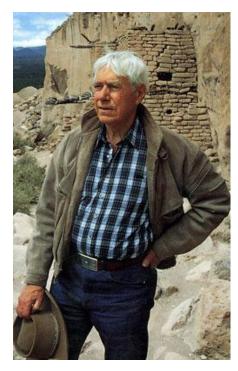






Intellectual background

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





Geert Hofstede 1928-2020

Edward T. Hall 1914-2009



Stress management

A major function of culture.

- We can look into the future...
- ...but we have limited ability to control it
- ...or even to see what it will bring.
- A recurring theme in this course.
 - Culture helps us to deal with the stress of uncertainty and lack of control.







Relationships vs. Rules



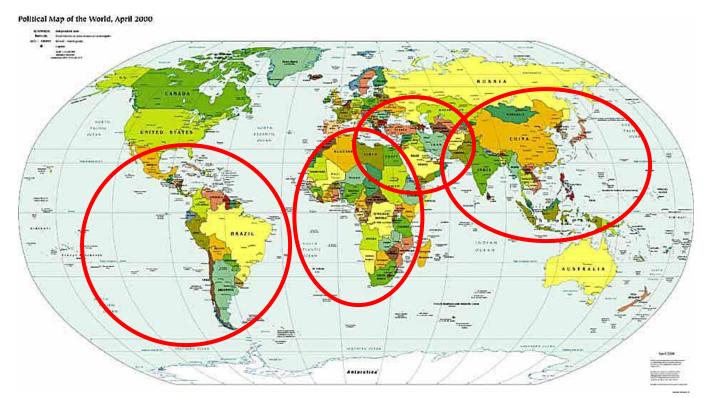
Two types of cultures

- 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 and they loyalties they imply.
 - Africa, Asia, Middle East, South America





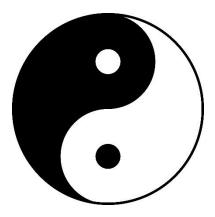
Rule-based = life is organized primarily by selflegitimizing rules.

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 trafficlaws.



Intersection in Varanasi, India

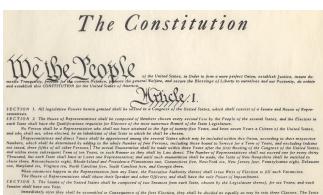


Concept of authority.

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



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



Immediately after they shall be assembled in Consequence of the first Election, they shall be divided as equally as may be into three Classes. The Sens of the Sensors of the first Class shall be vacated at the Expiration of the income of the second Class at the Expiration of the sinth Vean, and of the thrid Class at the Expiration of the sinth was, to that out-bind may be closen every second Vean, and I Veancies happen Meximum for or otherwise, during the Recess of the Lagislature of any Sate, the Executive thereof may make temporary Appointments until the next Meesing of the Legislature, which shall then fill they I veance of the second second

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or sense some some costs torro officers, and also a President pro tempore, in the absence of the Vice President, or show he shall exercise the Office of President of the United States. The Senset shall have the sole Power to try all Impeachments. When stitting for that Purpore, they shall be on Oath or Affirmation. When the President of the United States is tried, the Chief Junice shall preside: And an Person shall be conciled or united without the Concence of two birds of the Members present.

the United States is tried, the Chief Justice shall preside: And no Person shall be convicted without the Concurrence of two thirds of the Members present. Judgment in Cases of Impeachment shall not extend further than to renoval from Office, and dispublicitation to old and enjoy any Office of honor, Trust or Profit under the United States but the Party convicted shall neverheless be liable and subject to Indictment, Trial, Judgment and Pausimment, according to

Supreme Law of the Land U.S. Constitution



Mohammed bin Salman



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



Cultural Classification

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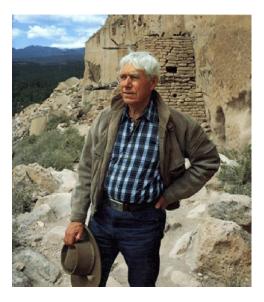
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Monochronic and polychronic

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



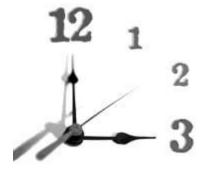




Monochronic and polychronic

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 monochronic.
 - **U.S.** is strongly monochronic.
 - Japan, Singapore and (to some extent) China are **punctual** but **polychronic**.





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.
 - Travel arrangements
 booked far in advance.

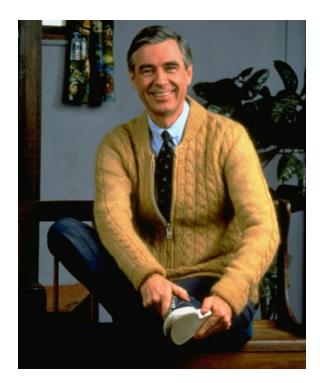






Monochronic cultures

- A stress management mechanism.
 - A structured day is a predictable day.
 - **Routine** is **reassuring**.





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.
- Travel arrangements made at the **last minute**.
 - e.g., India





Polychronic cultures

Stress is managed in other ways.

- ...than by structuring time.
- such as reliance on family and friends.
 - e.g., India, Saudi Arabia





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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 mustgrant 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 De facto leader of China 1978-1992



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



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.
 - Scandinavia & U.S. (salary & offices)
 - Power distance higher in U.S. business





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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.
- 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.





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.



In low-context cultures,

- Disagreements are resolved by **open discussion**.
- It is OK to say "no".
- Employees can express **disagreement** with company policy.





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 & foreign relations:
 In a low-context culture,

Nothing is agreed upon unless it is **part of the contract/agreement**.

In a high-context culture,

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







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Collectivist and individualist

Collectivist cultures

- Primary loyalty is to the **group**.
 - Usually the **family**, sometimes the village, company, or nation.
- Stress management: people rely on the group for support, security, predictability.
 - e.g., Mexico
- Focus on **cooperation**.
 - Example: noncompetitve students.





Collectivist and individualist

Individualist cultures

- Primary loyalty is to **oneself**.
 - People are held **individually responsible** for their own welfare.
 - People are expected to show **individual initiative**.
- Stress management: People believe in self-reliance and an orderly, efficient social system.
- **Focus on competition**.





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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

<i>iiveness</i> Masculine	Japan USA, UK, Ireland Philippines India	
<i>Competitiiveness</i> Feminine Mascu	East African cultures Arab cultures Eastern Slavic cultures <i>Machismo</i> cultures	Scandinavia Western Slavic cultures Thailand



Case study

Scandinavia

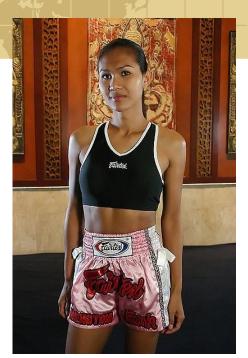
- Feminine culture
 - Men and women very **similar**
 - Emphasis on cooperation.
 - Negotiation is **not** a poker game... show all your cards.



Case study

Thailand

- Feminine culture?
 - Transgender and "3rd gender" individuals accepted
 - Velvet coups d'état.
 - In negotiation, show all your cards.



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.
- USA 🛛
- Hong Kong & coastal Chinese
- 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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Dionysian/Apollonian

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





Dionysian/Apollonian

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





Dionysian/Apollonian



Funeral, Norway Apollonian



Funeral, Palestine Dionysian



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.





Hofstede's Classification

The best known classification.

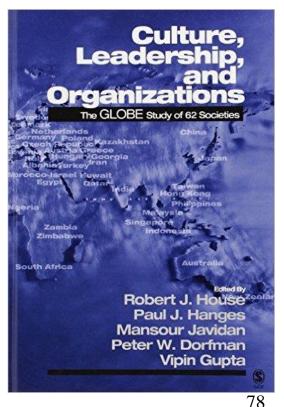
- From Geert Hofstede, Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind (3rd ed. 2010).
 - Based on a worldwide survey of employees of IBM subsidiaries in 50 countries.
- Often covered in executive workshops.
 - See as legitimate in the West due to its basis in quantifiable responses to surveys.





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.





				+		
	East Asia	Latin America	Other	Southern Europe	Other Western	2
	Malaysia Philippines Indonesia	Guatemala Panama Mexico Venezuela Ecuador	Arab countries India			
Power Distance	Singapore Hong Kong Thailand	Brazil Colombia El Salvador Peru Chile	West Africa Turkey East Africa	Yugoslavia Belgium	France	
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		Costa Rica	Jamaica		Canada Netherlands Australia W. Germany	
					U.K. Switzerland Finland Norway	
			Israel		Sweden Ireland New Zealand Denmark	
					Austria	

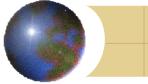
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	Philippines	Colombia Ecuador	S. Africa		W. Germany USA Australia
Masculine/ feminine	Hong Kong Malaysia	Argentina	India Arab countries	Greece Belgium	New Zealand Canada
(Hofstede)	Singapore Indonesia	Brazil	Pakistan Israel W. Africa		
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					Sweden

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					Switzerland
					Sweden Canada
		Costa Rica	Qatar		Australia
		Bolivia	Israel	Albania	Netherlands
			S. Africa (black)		Denmark

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

	East Asia	Latin America	Other	Southern & Eastern	Other Western
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			Morocco		Switzerland
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(GLOBE)		Argentina Brazil	Israel		Australia
	Singapore	Colombia	Georgia	France	England
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			Zambia	Italy	Canada
	Dhilippipor		Zimbabwe Iran	Poland Slovenia	Canada Ireland
	Philippines Taiwan		Namibia	Stovenia	Iretanu
	Malaysia	Guatemala	Egypt		
	Indonesia	Gutemata	-5725		Finland
	China	Bolivia			Denmark
		Costa Rica	India		
	Thailand		Russia	Portugal	
	Japan		Kuwait	-	New Zealand
					Sweden

	~ ~ .				
	East Asia	Latin America	Other	Southern & Eastern	Other Western
		Ecuador Colombia	Philippines	Europe	USA Canada Ireland
	Indonesia	Brazil	Israel	E. Germany	England Australia
		El Salvador Argentina		Spain Italy	New Zealand Austria
Performance oriented	Singapore	Costa Rica Mexico	Zimbabwe Namibia	Portugal Hungary	
(GLOBE)	Malaysia	Guatemala	Zambia Kuwait		W. Germany Switzerland
	Thailand	Venezuela Bolivia	S. Africa (white) Nigeria		Denmark Finland
			Kazakhstan India Georgia Russia		Sweden Netherlands
	Hong Kong Japan		Turkey Egypt	Poland Greece Slovenia	
	Taiwan China S. Korea		Iran S. Africa (black)	Albania	
	5. NOI CA		Morocco Qatar	France	87

	East Asia	Latin America	Other	Southern Europe	Other Western	
	Singapore				Switzerland Sweden Denmark	
Uncertainty avoidance - conceived as orderliness	China Malaysia		S. Africa (black)	E. Germany Albania	W. Germany Austria Finland New Zealand Netherlands England Canada	
and/or high context	Taiwan Hong Kong		Nigeria Kuwait	France	Australia Ireland	
and/or high power	Indonesia	Mexico	Namibia Zimbabwe India		USA	
distance	Japan		Zambia S. Africa (white) Egypt			
(GLOBE)	Thailand Philippines	Costa Rica	Israel Qatar	Spain Portugal		
		Ecuador	Iran Kazakhstan Morocco	Italy Slovenia		
	C. Kanaa	Argentina El Salvador Brazil	Turkey	Poland		
	S. Korea	Colombia Venezuela Bolivia	Georgia	Greece		
		Guatemala	Russia	Hungary	88	