

# The culture theory jungle: divergence and convergence in models of national culture

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On both a conceptual and empirical level, serious research on cultural differences in organization and management has been simultaneously facilitated and inhibited by the existence of multiple and often conflicting models of national culture. These models offer useful templates for comparing management processes, HRM policies, and business strategies across national borders. Some models have gone a step further and offered measures or numerical indicators for various countries that have been used widely in cross-cultural research. However, a problem that continues to plague organizational researchers in this area is a lack of convergence across these models. This divergence represents what we refer to as the *culture theory jungle* – a situation in which researchers must choose between competing, if sometimes overlapping, models to further their research goals and then defend such choices against a growing body of critics. This reality fails to facilitate either parsimony or rigor in organizational research, let alone useful comparisons across studies and samples.

As such, after a brief review of the divergence that currently exists in the most commonly used models of culture, we argue in this paper that a clear need exists to seek convergence across the various models where it exists in ways that facilitate both research and meaningful cross-cultural comparisons. We then seek such convergence by identifying five relative common themes, or *core cultural dimensions*, that pervade the various extant models. Based on these themes, culture ratings for country clusters are presented based on data secured through the use of multiple measures and multiple methods.

## Divergence in models of national culture

At present, there are at least six models of national cultures that continue to be widely cited and utilized in the organizational research literature. These include models proposed by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, Hofstede, Hall, Trompenaars, Schwartz, and House and his GLOBE associates. Each model highlights different aspects of societal beliefs, norms, and/or values and, as such, convergence across the models has been seen as being very limited. Below we summarize each of the six models very briefly as a prelude to a comparative analysis and attempted integration later in the paper. (Readers are referred to the original sources for a more in-depth discussion of each model.)

## Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck

Based on the initial research by Clyde Kluckhohn (1951), cultural anthropologists Florence Kluckhohn and Fred Strodtbeck (1961) suggested one of the earliest models of culture that has served as a principal foundation for several later models. They proposed a theory of culture based on value orientations, arguing that there are a limited number of problems that are common to all human groups and for which there are a limited number of solutions. They further suggested that values in any given society are distributed in a way that creates a dominant value system. They used anthropological theories to identify five value orientations, four of which were later tested in five subcultures of the American Southwest: two Native American

**Table 1.1 Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's cultural dimensions**

Cultural Dimensions	Scale Anchors		
<i>Relationship with Nature:</i> Beliefs about the need or responsibility to control nature.	Mastery: Belief that people have need or responsibility to control nature.	Harmony: Belief that people should work with nature to maintain harmony or balance.	Subjugation: Belief that individuals must submit to nature.
<i>Relationship with People:</i> Beliefs about social structure.	Individualistic: Belief that social structure should be arranged based on individuals.	Collateral: Belief that social structure should be based on groups of individuals with relatively equal status.	Lineal: Belief that social structure should be based on groups with clear and rigid hierarchical relationships.
<i>Human Activities:</i> Beliefs about appropriate goals.	Being: Belief that people should concentrate on living for the moment.	Becoming: belief that individuals should strive to develop themselves into an integrated whole.	Doing: belief on striving for goals and accomplishments.
<i>Relationship with Time:</i> Extent to which past, present, and future influence decisions.	Past: In making decisions, people are principally influenced by past events or traditions.	Present: In making decisions, people are principally influenced by present circumstances.	Future: In making decisions, people are principally influenced by future prospects.
<i>Human Nature:</i> Beliefs about good, neutral or evil human nature.	Good: Belief that people are inherently good.	Neutral: Belief that people are inherently neutral.	Evil: Belief that people are inherently evil

tribes, a Hispanic village, a Mormon village, and a farming village of Anglo-American homesteaders. The five dimensions are identified in table 1.1. Each dimension is represented on a three-point continuum.

## Hofstede

Dutch management researcher Geert Hofstede (1980, 2001) advanced the most widely used model of cultural differences in the organizations literature. His model was derived from a study of employees from various countries working for major multinational corporation and was based on the assumption that different cultures can be distinguished based on differences in what they value. That is, some cultures place a high value on equality among individuals, while others place a high value on hierarchies or power distances between people. Likewise, some cultures value certainty in everyday life and have difficulty coping with unanticipated events, while others have a greater tolerance for ambiguity and seem to relish change. Taken together, Hofstede argues that it is possible to gain considerable insight into organized behavior across cultures based on these value dimensions.

Initially, Hofstede asserted that cultures could be distinguished along four dimensions, but later added a fifth dimension based on his research with Michael Bond (1991). The final five dimensions are illustrated in table 1.2.

## Hall

Edward T. Hall (1981, 1990), a noted American cultural anthropologist, has proposed a model of culture based on his ethnographic research in several societies, notably Germany, France, the US, and Japan. His research focuses primarily on how cultures vary in interpersonal communication, but also includes work on personal space and time. These three cultural dimensions are summarized in table 1.3. Many of the terms used today in the field of cross-cultural management (e.g., monochronic-polychronic) are derived from this work.

## Trompenaars

Building on the work of Hofstede, Dutch management researcher Fons Trompenaars (Trompenaars, 1993; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1998)

**Table 1.2 Hofstede's cultural**

Cultural Dimensions
<i>Power Distance:</i> Beliefs about the appropriate distribution of power in society.
<i>Uncertainty Avoidance:</i> Degree of uncertainty that can be tolerated and its impact on rule making.
<i>Individualism-Collectivism:</i> Relative importance of individual vs. group interests.
<i>Masculinity-Femininity:</i> Assertiveness vs. passivity; material possessions vs. quality of life.
<i>Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation:</i> Outlook on work, life, and relationships.

**Table 1.3 Hall's cultural dim**

Cultural Dimensions
<i>Context:</i> Extent to which the content of a message is as important as the message itself.
<i>Space:</i> Extent to which people are comfortable sharing physical space with others.
<i>Time:</i> Extent to which people approach one task at a time or multiple tasks simultaneously.

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first five dimensions focu-  
people, while the last two  
ment and society's relatio-

**Table 1.2 Hofstede's cultural dimensions**

Cultural Dimensions	Scale Anchors	
<i>Power Distance:</i> Beliefs about the appropriate distribution of power in society.	Low power distance: Belief that effective leaders do not need to have substantial amounts of power compared to their subordinates. Examples: Austria, Israel, Denmark, Ireland, Norway, Sweden.	High power distance: Belief that people in positions of authority should have considerable power compared to their subordinates. Examples: Malaysia, Mexico, Saudi Arabia.
<i>Uncertainty Avoidance:</i> Degree of uncertainty that can be tolerated and its impact on rule making.	Low uncertainty avoidance: Tolerance for ambiguity; little need for rules to constrain uncertainty. Examples: Singapore, Jamaica, Denmark, Sweden, UK.	High uncertainty avoidance: Intolerance for ambiguity; need for many rules to constrain uncertainty. Examples: Greece, Portugal, Uruguay, Japan, France, Spain.
<i>Individualism-Collectivism:</i> Relative importance of individual vs. group interests.	Collectivism: Group interests generally take precedence over individual interests. Examples: Japan, Korea, Indonesia, Pakistan, Latin America.	Individualism: Individual interests generally take precedence over group interests. Examples: US, Australia, UK, Netherlands, Italy, Scandinavia.
<i>Masculinity-Femininity:</i> Assertiveness vs. passivity; material possessions vs. quality of life.	Masculinity: Values material possessions, money, and the pursuit of personal goals. Examples: Japan, Austria, Italy, Switzerland, Mexico.	Femininity: Values strong social relevance, quality of life, and the welfare of others. Examples: Sweden, Norway, Netherlands, Costa Rica.
<i>Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation:</i> Outlook on work, life, and relationships.	Short-term orientation: Past and present orientation. Values traditions and social obligations. Examples: Pakistan, Nigeria, Philippines, Russia.	Long-term orientation: Future orientation. Values dedication, hard work, and thrift. Examples: China, Korea, Japan, Brazil.

**Table 1.3 Hall's cultural dimensions**

Cultural Dimensions	Scale Anchors	
<i>Context:</i> Extent to which the context of a message is as important as the message itself.	Low context: Direct and frank communication; message itself conveys its meaning. Examples: Germany, US, Scandinavia.	High context: Much of the meaning in communication is conveyed indirectly through the context surrounding a message. Examples: Japan, China.
<i>Space:</i> Extent to which people are comfortable sharing physical space with others.	Center of power: Territorial; need for clearly delineated personal space between themselves and others. Examples: US, Japan.	Center of community: Communal; comfortable sharing personal space with others. Examples: Latin America, Arab States.
<i>Time:</i> Extent to which people approach one task at a time or multiple tasks simultaneously.	Monochronic: Sequential attention to individual goals; separation of work and personal life; precise concept of time. Examples: Germany, US, Scandinavia.	Polychronic: Simultaneous attention to multiple goals; integration of work and personal life; relative concept of time. Examples: France, Spain, Mexico, Brazil, Arab States.

presented a somewhat different model of culture based on his study of Shell and other managers over a ten-year period. His model is based on the early work of Harvard sociologists Parsons and Shils (1951) and focuses on variations in both values and personal relationships across cultures. It consists of seven dimensions, as shown on table 1.4. The first five dimensions focus on relationships among people, while the last two focus on time management and society's relationship with nature.

### Schwartz

Taking a decidedly more psychological view, Shalom Schwartz (1992, 1994) and his associates asserted that the essential distinction between societal values is the motivational goals they express. He identified ten universal human values that reflect needs, social motives, and social institutional demands (Kagitçibasi, 1997). These values are purportedly found in all cultures and

**Table 1.4 Trompenaars' cultural dimensions**

Cultural Dimensions	Scale Anchors	
<i>Universalism-Particularism:</i> Relative importance of applying standardized rules and policies across societal members; role of exceptions in rule enforcement.	Universalism: Reliance on formal rules and policies that are applied equally to everyone. Examples: Austria, Germany, Switzerland, US.	Particularism: Rules must be tempered by the nature of the situation and the people involved. Examples: China, Venezuela, Indonesia, Korea.
<i>Individualism-Collectivism:</i> Extent to which people derive their identity from within themselves or their group.	Individualism: Focus on individual achievement and independence. Examples: US, Nigeria, Mexico, Argentina.	Collectivism: Focus on group achievement and welfare. Examples: Singapore, Thailand, Japan.
<i>Specific-Diffuse:</i> Extent to which people's various roles are compartmentalized or integrated.	Specific: Clear separation of a person's various roles. Examples: Sweden, Germany, Canada, UK, US.	Diffuse: Clear integration of a person's various roles. Examples: China, Venezuela, Mexico, Japan, Spain.
<i>Neutral-Affective:</i> Extent to which people are free to express their emotions in public.	Neutral: Refrain from showing emotions; hide feelings. Examples: Japan, Singapore, UK.	Affective: Emotional expressions acceptable or encouraged. Examples: Mexico, Brazil, Italy.
<i>Achievement-Ascription:</i> Manner in which respect and social status are accorded to people.	Achievement: Respect for earned accomplishments. Examples: Austria, US, Switzerland.	Ascription: Respect for ascribed or inherited status. Examples: Egypt, Indonesia, Korea, Hungary.
<i>Time Perspective:</i> Relative focus on the past or the future in daily activities.	Past/present oriented: Emphasis on past events and glory. Examples: France, Spain, Portugal, Arab countries.	Future oriented: Emphasis on planning and future possibilities. Examples: China, Japan, Korea, Sweden, US.
<i>Relationship with Environment:</i> Extent to which people believe they control the environment or it controls them.	Inner-directed: Focus on controlling the environment. Examples: Australia, US, UK.	Outer-directed: Focus on living in harmony with nature. Examples: China, India; Sweden, Egypt, Korea.

represent universal needs of human existence. The human values identified are: power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity, and security.

Schwartz (1994) argued that individual and cultural levels of analysis are conceptually independent. Individual-level dimensions reflect the psychological dynamics that individuals experience when acting on their values in the everyday life, while cultural-level dimensions reflect the solutions that societies find to regulate human actions. At the cultural level of analysis, Schwartz identified three dimensions: conservatism and autonomy, hierarchy versus egalitarianism, and mastery versus harmony, summarized in table 1.5 below. Based on this model, he studied school teachers and college students in fifty-four countries. His model has been applied to basic areas of social behavior, but its application to organizational studies has been limited (Bond, 2001).

## GLOBE

Finally, in one of the most ambitious efforts to study cultural dimensions, Robert House led an international team of researchers that focused primarily on understanding the influence of cultural differences on leadership processes (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, and Gupta, 2004). Their investigation was called the "GLOBE study" for Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness. In their research, the GLOBE researchers identified nine cultural dimensions, as summarized in table 1.6. While several of these dimensions have been identified previously (e.g., individualism-collectivism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance), others are unique (e.g., gender egalitarianism and performance orientation).

Based on this assessment, the GLOBE researchers collected data in sixty-two countries and compared the results. Systematic differences were found in leader behavior across the cultures.

**Table 1.5 Schwartz's cultural dimensions**

Cultural Dimensions	Scale Anchors
<i>Conservatism-Autonomy:</i> Extent to which individuals are integrated in groups.	Conservatism: Preference for a hierarchical structure in a group. Autonomy: Preference for a flat structure in a group.
<i>Hierarchy-Egalitarianism:</i> Extent to which equality is valued and expected.	Hierarchy: Preference for a hierarchical structure. Egalitarianism: Preference for a flat structure.
<i>Mastery-Harmony:</i> Extent to which people seek to change the natural and social world to advance personal or group interests.	Mastery: Preference for a world that is under human control. Harmony: Preference for a world that is in harmony with nature.

For example, participatory leadership is often accepted in the individualistic west, but is often viewed as a sign of questionable effectiveness in the collectivistic east. Asian managers place a high value on paternalistic leadership and group harmony. Charismatic leaders are common in many cultures, although they may be less common in some cultures and passive in others. Leaders in the US are expected to behave in a more assertive, confident, and dignified, while leaders in the east seldom behave in this manner. Leaders in the west are assertive, more confident, bold, and proactive, while leaders in the east seem to support highly autocratic leadership. The principal contributions of the GLOBE study have been systematically to study cultural differences in leader behavior and effectiveness.

## Seeking convergence in multinational culture

Taken together, these six culture dimensions can accomplish two things: First, establish a well-respected set of dimensions that can be compared. Second, identify the differences between cultures.

Table 1.5 Schwartz's cultural dimensions

Cultural Dimensions	Scale Anchors	
<i>Conservatism-Autonomy:</i> Extent to which individuals are integrated in groups.	Conservatism: individuals are embedded in a collectivity, finding meaning through participation and identification with a group that shares their way of life.	Autonomy: individuals are autonomous from groups, finding meaning on their own uniqueness. Two types of autonomy: Intellectual autonomy: (independent pursuit of ideas and rights) and Affective autonomy (independent pursuit of affectively positive experience).
<i>Hierarchy-Egalitarianism:</i> Extent to which equality is valued and expected.	Hierarchy: cultures are organized hierarchically. Individuals are socialized to comply with their roles and are sanctioned if they do not.	Egalitarianism: Individuals are seen as moral equals who share basic interests as human beings.
<i>Mastery-Harmony:</i> Extent to which people seek to change the natural and social world to advance personal or group interests.	Mastery: individuals value getting ahead through self-assertion and seek to change the natural and social world to advance personal or group interests.	Harmony: individuals accept the world as it is and try to preserve it rather than exploit it.

For example, participatory leadership styles that are often accepted in the individualistic west are of questionable effectiveness in the more collectivistic east. Asian managers place a heavy emphasis on paternalistic leadership and group maintenance activities. Charismatic leaders can be found in most cultures, although they may be highly assertive in some cultures and passive in others. A leader who listens carefully to his or her subordinates is more valued in the US than in China. Malaysian leaders are expected to behave in a manner that is humble, dignified, and modest, while American leaders seldom behave in this manner. Indians prefer leaders who are assertive, morally principled, ideological, bold, and proactive. Family and tribal norms support highly autocratic leaders in many Arab countries (House *et al.*, 2004). Clearly, one of the principal contributions of the GLOBE project has been systematically to study not just cultural dimensions but how variations in such dimensions affect leadership behavior and effectiveness.

### Seeking convergence in models of national culture

Taken together, these six culture models attempt to accomplish two things: First, each model offers a well-reasoned set of dimensions along which various cultures can be compared. In this regard, they

offer a form of intellectual shorthand for cultural analysis, allowing researchers to break down assessments of various cultures into power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and so forth, and thus organize their thoughts and focus attention on what otherwise would be a monumental task. Second, four of the models offer numeric scores for rating various cultures. For example, we can use Hofstede to say that Germany is a 35 while France is a 68 on power distance, suggesting that Germany is more egalitarian than France. Regardless of whether these ratings are highly precise or only generally indicative of these countries, they nonetheless provide one indication of how these countries might vary culturally.

As is evident from this review, there are many different ways to represent cultural differences. Unfortunately, the six cultural models available frequently focus on different aspects of societal beliefs, norms, or values and, as such, convergence across the models seems at first glance to be limited. This lack of convergence presents important challenges both for researchers attempting to study cultural influences on management and for managers trying to understand new cultural settings.

Instead of advocating one model over another, we suggest that all of the models have important factors to contribute to our understanding of culture as it relates to management practices. In order to navigate this culture theory jungle, we argue

**Table 1.6 GLOBE's cultural dimensions**

Cultural Dimensions	Scale Anchors	
<i>Power Distance:</i> Degree to which people expect power to be distributed equally.	High: Society divided into classes; power bases are stable and scarce; power is seen as providing social order; limited upward mobility.	Low: Society has large middle class; power bases are transient and sharable; power often seen as a source of corruption, coercion, and dominance; high upward mobility.
<i>Uncertainty Avoidance:</i> Extent to which people rely on norms, rules, and procedures to reduce the unpredictability of future events.	High: Tendency to formalize social interactions; document agreements in legal contracts; be orderly and maintain meticulous records; rely on rules and formal policies.	Low: Tendency to be more informal in social interactions; reliance on word of people they trust; less concerned with orderliness and record-keeping; rely on informal norms of behavior.
<i>Humane Orientation:</i> Extent to which people reward fairness, altruism, and generosity.	High: Interests of others important; values altruism, benevolence, kindness, and generosity; high need for belonging and affiliation; fewer psychological and pathological problems.	Low: Self-interest important; values pleasure, comfort, and self-enjoyment; high need for power and possessions; more psychological and pathological problems.
<i>Institutional Collectivism:</i> Extent to which society encourages collective distribution of resources and collective action.	High: Individuals integrated into strong cohesive groups; self viewed as interdependent with groups; societal goals often take precedence over individual goals.	Low: Individuals largely responsible for themselves; self viewed as autonomous; individual goals often take precedence over societal or group goals.
<i>In-Group Collectivism:</i> Extent to which individuals express pride, loyalty, and cohesiveness in their organizations and families.	High: Members assume they are interdependent and seek to make important personal contributions to group or organization; long-term employer-employee relationships; organizations assume major responsibility of employee welfare; important decisions made by groups.	Low: Members assume they are independent of the organization and seek to stand out by making individual contributions; short-term employer-employee relationships; organizations primarily interested in the work performed by employees over their personal welfare.
<i>Assertiveness:</i> Degree to which people are assertive, confrontational, and aggressive in relationships with others.	High: Value assertiveness, dominance, and tough behavior for all members of society; sympathy for the strong; value competition; belief in success through hard work; values direct and unambiguous communication.	Low: Prefers modesty and tenderness to assertiveness; sympathy for the weak; values cooperation; often associates competition with defeat and punishment; values face-saving in communication and action.
<i>Gender Egalitarianism:</i> Degree to which gender differences are minimized.	High: High participation of women in the workforce; more women in positions of authority; women accorded equal status in society.	Low: Low participation of women in the workforce; fewer women in positions of authority; women not accorded equal status in society.
<i>Future Orientation:</i> Extent to which people engage in future-oriented behaviors such as planning, investing, and delayed gratification.	High: Greater emphasis on economic success; propensity to save for the future; values intrinsic motivation; organizations tend to be flexible and adaptive.	Low: Less emphasis on economic success; propensity for instant gratification; values extrinsic motivation; organizations tend to be bureaucratic and inflexible.
<i>Performance Orientation:</i> Degree to which high performance is encouraged and rewarded.	High: Belief that individuals are in control of their destiny; values assertiveness, competitiveness, and materialism; emphasizes performance over people.	Low: Values harmony with environment over control; emphasizes seniority, loyalty, social relationships, and belongingness; values who people are more than what they do.

that the most productive approach is to integrate and adapt the various models based on their utility for better understanding business and management in cross-cultural settings. In doing so, we seek common themes that collectively represent

the principal differences between cultures. While no single model can cover all aspects of a culture, we believe it is possible to tease out the principal cultural characteristics through such a comparative analysis.

**Table 1.7 Common themes**

Common Themes
Distribution of power and authority
Emphasis on groups or individuals
Relationship with environment
Use of time
Personal and social control
Other themes (see text)

Note: Numbers indicate the number of countries.

In our view, five common themes emerge from table 1.7:

1. *Distribution of power and authority.* How are power and authority distributed in society? Is this distribution based on hierarchy or egalitarian beliefs concerning equality?
2. *Centrality of individuals or groups.* What is the building block of a society? How does a society encourage individual or group action?
3. *People's relationship with their environment.* On a societal level, how do people view the natural and social environment? Do they seek to control the environment or to live in harmony with it?
4. *Use of time.* How do people view and manage their time? Do they value work and non-work activities? Is work in a linear or a non-linear fashion?
5. *Mechanisms of personal and social control.* How do societies try to control the behavior of their members? Do they control people through laws, policies, and social norms, or through personal ties or unique customs?

Table 1.7 Common themes across models of national culture

Common Themes	Culture Models					
	Kluckhohn/ Strodtbeck	Hofstede	Hall	Trompenaars	Schwartz	GLOBE
Distribution of power and authority		1	1	1	1	2
Emphasis on groups or individuals	1	1		1	1	2
Relationship with environment	2	1		1	1	3
Use of time	1	1	1	1		1
Personal and social control	1	1		1		1
Other themes (see text)			1	2		

Note: Numbers indicate the number of cultural dimensions from the various models that fit within each theme.

In our view, five relatively distinct common themes emerge from this comparison (see table 1.7):

1. *Distribution of power and authority in society.* How are power and authority distributed in a society? Is this distribution based on concepts of hierarchy or egalitarianism? What are societal beliefs concerning equality or privilege?
2. *Centrality of individuals or groups as the basis of social relationships.* What is the fundamental building block of a society: individuals or groups? How does a society organize for collective action?
3. *People's relationship with their environment.* On a societal level, how do people view the world around them and their relationship with the natural and social environment? Is their goal to control the environment and events around them or to live in harmony with these external realities?
4. *Use of time.* How do people in a society organize and manage their time to carry out their work and non-work activities? Do people approach work in a linear or a nonlinear fashion?
5. *Mechanisms of personal and social control.* How do societies try to insure predictability in the behavior of their members? Do they work to control people through uniformly applied rules, policies, laws, and social norms or rely more on personal ties or unique circumstances?

To achieve this clustering, we must recognize that in a few cases multiple dimensions in the

original models can be merged into a single more general or unifying cultural dimension (e.g., institutional and in-group collectivism in the GLOBE model), as discussed below. In addition, we need to look beyond the simple adjectives often used by the various researchers and seek deeper meaning in the various concepts themselves, also as discussed below.

At first glance, these five themes seem to replicate Hofstede's five dimensions, but closer analysis suggests that the other models serve to amplify, clarify, and, in some cases, reposition dimensions so they are more relevant for the contemporary workplace. Indeed, we believe that the commonality across these models reinforces their utility (and possible validity) as critical evaluative components in better understanding global management and the world of international business. As such, each model thus adds something of value to this endeavor.

### Core cultural dimensions: an integrative summary

Based on this assessment, we suggest that the advancement of cross-cultural organizational research lies not in developing new models of national culture or debating the validity of the various extant models, but rather in seeking commonalities or convergence among existing ones. To accomplish this, we examine each of the five principal themes of cultural differences that emerged

**Table 1.8 Core cultural dimensions: an integrative summary**

Core Cultural Dimensions	Focus of Dimensions
Hierarchy-Equality	<i>Power distribution in organizations and society:</i> Extent to which power and authority in a society are distributed hierarchically or in a more egalitarian and participative fashion.
Individualism-Collectivism	<i>Role of individuals and groups in social relationships:</i> Extent to which social relationships emphasize individual rights and responsibilities or group goals and collective action; centrality of individuals or groups in society.
Mastery-Harmony	<i>Relationship with the natural and social environment:</i> Beliefs concerning how the world works; extent to which people seek to change and control or live in harmony with their natural and social surroundings.
Monochronism-Polychronism	<i>Organization and utilization of time:</i> Extent to which people organize their time based on sequential attention to single tasks or simultaneous attention to multiple tasks; time as fixed vs. time as flexible.
Universalism-Particularism	<i>Relative importance of rules vs. relationships in behavioral control:</i> Extent to which rules, laws, and formal procedures are uniformly applied across societal members or tempered by personal relationships, in-group values, or unique circumstances.

from our comparison, identifying similarities and differences where they exist and teasing out the details. We refer to these themes as *core cultural dimensions* (CCDs) to reflect both their centrality and commonality in cross-cultural organizational research (see table 1.8). However, it should be emphasized that credit for the identification of these dimensions goes to previous researchers; our focus here is simply to identify a means of integrating, interpreting, and building upon their signal contributions.

### Hierarchy-equality

The first common theme running through the various models relates to how individuals within a society structure their power relationships. That is, is power in a society distributed based primarily on vertical or horizontal relationships? Is power allocated *hierarchically* or in a more *egalitarian* fashion?

Hofstede's (1980) refers to this as power distance and defines it as the beliefs people have about the appropriateness of either large or small differences in power and authority between the members of a group or society. Some cultures, particularly those in several Asian, Arab, and Latin American countries, stress "high power distance," believing that it is natural or beneficial for some members of a group or society to

exert considerable control over their subordinates. Subordinates are expected to do what they are told with few questions. However, this control does not necessarily have to be abusive; rather, it could be benevolent where a strong master exerts control to look after the welfare of the entire group. Other cultures, particularly those in Scandinavia, stress a "low power distance," believing in a more egalitarian or participative approach to social or organizational structure. They expect subordinates to be consulted on key issues that affect them and will accept strong leaders to the extent that they support democratic principles.

Schwartz (1994) recognizes a similar cultural dimension, which he calls hierarchy and egalitarianism, the terms we have adopted here. In "hierarchical" societies, the unequal distribution of power, roles, and resources is legitimate. Individuals are socialized to comply with obligations and roles according to their hierarchical position in society and are sanctioned if they do not. In "egalitarian" cultures, individuals are seen as moral equals and are socialized to internalize a commitment to voluntary cooperation with others and to be concerned with others' welfare. According to Schwartz' research, China, Thailand, and Turkey are hierarchical cultures, while Denmark, Sweden, and Norway are egalitarian cultures.

The GLOBE study (House *et al.*, 2004) also includes a cultural dimension referring to the power distribution in society. However, it also

adds a more specific cultural dimension to the issue of gender equality. GLOBE researchers, the "position" focuses on the degree to which power is distributed equally. The "egalitarianism" dimension focuses on which gender differences are

Trompenaars (1993) takes a different approach here. Rather than the distribution of power, he focuses on how rewards are allocated in a "merit" cultures, status and reward are an individual or group's accomplishment in "ascriptive" cultures, such as largely on such things as social class, or gender. Achievement is only when they are relevant and usually earn respect through success. By contrast, people in ascriptive cultures routinely as a means of reinforcing and typically select their leaders based on background.

As noted in table 1.9, several dimensions relate to power orientation in organizations. Should authority ultimately rest with such as dictatorships or absolute power in the people themselves? Should the structure be vertically (e.g., hierarchical structures) or horizontally (e.g., team structures) or even networked? Are decision-making largely autonomous? Are leaders chosen because of their standing in the community? Are they appointed? Are people willing to accept authority?

### Individualism vs. collectivism

The cultural dimension that has received the most attention in the research is individualism-collectivism. All societies vary in the fundamental social organization. A common theme in the models is recognition of the organized based on group or organized based on individuals.



adds a more specific cultural dimension, referring to the issue of gender egalitarianism. For the GLOBE researchers, the “power distance” dimension focuses on the degree to which people expect power to be distributed equally, while the “gender egalitarianism” dimension focuses on the degree to which gender differences are minimized.

Trompenaars (1993) takes a somewhat different approach here. Rather than focusing on the distribution of power, he focuses on how status and rewards are allocated in a culture. In “achievement” cultures, status and rewards are based on an individual or group’s accomplishments, while in “ascription” cultures, such recognition is based largely on such things as seniority, inheritance, class, or gender. Achievement cultures use titles only when they are relevant and their leaders typically earn respect through superior performance. By contrast, people in ascription cultures use titles routinely as a means of reinforcing a hierarchy and typically select their leaders based on age or background.

As noted in table 1.9, several key questions pertaining to power orientation include the following: Should authority ultimately reside in institutions such as dictatorships or absolute monarchies or in the people themselves? Should organizations be structured vertically (e.g., tall organization structures) or horizontally (e.g., flat organization structures or even networked structures)? Is decision-making largely autocratic or participatory? Are leaders chosen because they are the most qualified for a job or because they already have standing in the community? Are leaders elected or appointed? Are people willing or reluctant to question authority?

### Individualism vs. collectivism

The cultural dimension that has by far received the most attention in the research literature is individualism–collectivism. All six models recognize that cultures vary in the fundamental structures of social organization. A common theme that permeates the models is recognition that some cultures are organized based on groups, while others are organized based on individuals. The most common

**Table 1.9 Hierarchy-equality dimension**

Hierarchical	Egalitarian
Belief that power should be distributed hierarchically.	Belief that power should be distributed relatively equally.
Belief in ascribed or inherited power with ultimate authority residing in institutions.	Belief in shared or elected power with ultimate authority residing in the people.
Emphasis on organizing vertically.	Emphasis on organizing horizontally.
Preference for autocratic or centralized decision-making.	Preference for participatory or decentralized decision-making.
Emphasis on who is in charge.	Emphasis on who is best qualified.
Acceptance of authority; reluctance to question authority.	Rejection or skepticism of authority; willingness to question authority.

terms used to describe this are *individualistic* and *collectivistic*. The fundamental difference across the models refers to the extent to which this dimension is related to or separated from the power orientation dimension (see below). Some researchers suggest that a single dimension dealing with relationships among people (including both group orientation and power) is more appropriate to distinguish between cultures, while others retain these as separate dimensions. For our purposes, we will discuss these two dimensions separately, although we recognize that their relationship to each other is important.

Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) suggested that there are important variations in how individuals relate to each other across cultures. They classified cultures in three types: individualistic, collateral, and lineal. In “individualistic” cultures, individual goals are considered more important and are encouraged to pursue their own personal interests at the expense of others. In “collateral” cultures, individuals see themselves as part of a social group, formed by laterally extended relationships. In “lineal” cultures, the group is equally important but the nature of the group changes. One of the most important goals of lineal societies is the continuity of the group through time, resulting in a strong emphasis in ordered positional succession.

Hofstede (1980) is generally given credit for introducing the terms individualistic or collectivistic. According to his definition, "individualistic" cultures teach their people to be responsible for themselves and that, in a sense, the world revolves around them. Their job is to become independent and to reap the rewards of their individual endeavors. Individual achievement is admired and people should not be emotionally dependent on organizations or groups. By contrast, "collectivistic" cultures stress group interests over those of the individual. They stress personal relationships, achieving harmony as an overriding societal objective, and the central role of the family in both personal and business affairs. One's identity is difficult to separate from that of one's group. Group decision-making is preferred and groups protect their members in exchange for unquestioned loyalty. This is not to say that individuals are unimportant; they are. Rather, collectivistic cultures tend to believe that people can only attain their full potential as a member of a strong group. The US and western European cultures tend to be individualistic, while Asian cultures tend to be mostly collectivistic.

Trompenaars' (1993) dimension mirrors Hofstede's earlier work. He differentiates between individualism, where people think of themselves first and foremost as individuals, and collectivism, where people think of themselves first and foremost as members of a group. The only difference between these two sets of dimensions can be found in their application. For example, while Hofstede lists Mexico and Argentina as relatively collectivistic, Trompenaars lists them as individualistic. Whether this resulted from different measurement techniques or from changes in the cultures in the ten-year interlude between the two studies has not been explained.

Schwartz's (1994) dimension is also closely related to individualism and collectivism. He classified cultures along an autonomy-conservatism dimension, focusing on how individuals see themselves with respect to others. In "autonomous" cultures, individuals see themselves as autonomous entities with independent rights and needs. Individuals in autonomous cultures relate to one another based on self-interest and negotiated agreements. Schwartz distinguishes between two types

of autonomy: intellectual and affective. Intellectual autonomy refers to an emphasis on self-direction and independence of thought, while affective autonomy refers to an emphasis on the pursuit of one's interests and desires. By contrast, "conservatism" cultures stress preserving the status quo, propriety, and the traditional order. Cultures towards the conservatism pole stress closely knit harmonious relationships. Individual and group interests are aligned and one finds meaning in life by taking part in a group. According to Schwartz (1994), Israel, Malaysia, and Bulgaria are conservative cultures, while France, Switzerland, and Germany are autonomous cultures.

The GLOBE project (House *et al.*, 2004) subdivided this dimension into institutional and in-group individualism-collectivism, the distinction being one of level of analysis. "Institutional collectivism" refers to the extent to which society encourages collective distribution of resources and collective action, while "in-group collectivism" refers to the extent to which individuals express pride, loyalty, and cohesiveness in their particular organizations and families. Other researchers have also made a distinction between individual and cultural level of analysis (Triandis, 1986). For our purposes here, however, we will only focus on cultural level of analysis, i.e. national or regional, under the assumption that cultural level influences are more relevant to the study of management practice.

Finally, although Hall (1959, 1981) does not directly refer to individualism and collectivism, his notion of interpersonal communication, specifically how much context surrounds people's messages, is closely related to the way societies are organized. Hall distinguishes between low and high context cultures. In "low context" cultures, such as Germany, Scandinavian countries, and the US, the context surrounding the message is far less important than the message itself. The context provides the speaker and listener with very little information relating to the intended message. As a result, people need to rely more on providing greater message clarity, as well as other guarantees like written contracts or information-rich advertising. Language precision is critical, while verbal agreements, assumed understandings, innuendos, and body language count for little. By contrast, in

"high context" cultures, such as Japan, the context in which the message is communicated (the social environment in which the message is communicated) is often as important as the message itself. Indeed, the way a message is communicated is at times even more important than the actual message. Here, communication is based on personal relationships, mutual respect, and reputations. People know the context well enough to pick up on what is important – and necessary – and what does not need to be said or written down. Cultures tend to be relatively low context cultures tend to be high context.

In summary, the individualism-collectivism dimension has been widely used in models of culture as represented in understanding what differs from another. In general, the distinction is on the fundamental issue of how interpersonal relationships are organized on individuals or groups and how they are organized (see table 1.10). The models include the following: Do individuals identify through their own membership? Are individuals more important? Do groups have personal responsibility or are individuals more important? Is individual or group identity preferred? Is business done on written contracts or on personal communication characterized by high context (where the message is all of the intended message) or low context (where the context surrounding the message carries significant information)?

#### Mastery vs. harmony

Five of the six models represent an important variation regarding the degree to which individuals believe they can control their environment or influence it. Some models focus on individuals believe they can control their environment, while others focus on harmony.

“high context” cultures, such as Japan and China, the context in which the message is conveyed (that is, the social environment in which the message is communicated) is often as important as the message itself. Indeed, the way something is said is at times even more important in communicating a message than the actual words that are used. Here, communication is based on long-term interpersonal relationships, mutual trust, and personal reputations. People know the people they are talking with, and reading someone’s face becomes an important – and necessary – art. As a result, less needs to be said or written down. High context cultures tend to be relatively collectivistic, while low context cultures tend to be more individualistic.

In summary, the individualism-collectivism dimension has been widely identified in previous models of culture as representing a key variable in understanding what differentiates one society from another. In general, this dimension focuses on the fundamental issue of whether society and interpersonal relationships are organized based on individuals or groups as their principal building blocks (see table 1.10). Basic questions here include the following: Do people achieve self-identity through their own efforts or through group membership? Are individual goals or group goals more important? Do group sanctions reinforce personal responsibility or conformity to group norms? Is individual or group decision-making preferred? Is business done primarily based on written contracts or on personal relationships? Is communication characterized primarily by low context (where the message contains all or most all of the intended message) or by high context (where the context surrounding the message also carries significant information)?

**Mastery vs. harmony** *агрессивность vs. гармония.*

Five of the six models reviewed here agree that there are important variations across cultures with regard to the degree to which people try to control their environment or adapt to their surroundings. Some models focus on the degree to which individuals believe they can and should control nature, while others focus on the degree to which

**Table 1.10. Individualism-collectivism dimension**

Individualistic	Collectivistic
Person-centered approach valued; primary loyalty to oneself.	Group-centered approach valued; primary loyalty to the group.
Preference for preserving individual rights over social harmony.	Preference for preserving social harmony over individual rights.
Belief that people achieve self-identity through individual accomplishment.	Belief that people achieve self-identity through group membership.
Focus on accomplishing individual goals.	Focus on accomplishing group goals.
Sanctions reinforce independence and personal responsibility.	Sanctions reinforce conformity to group norms.
Contract-based agreements.	Relationship-based agreements.
Tendency toward low-context (direct, frank) communication.	Tendency toward high-context (subtle, indirect) communication.
Tendency toward individual decision-making.	Tendency toward group or participative decision-making.

individuals value achievement or accommodation with nature. Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) propose two separate cultural dimensions that relate to this dimension. The first dimension focuses on how humans relate to nature. They identified three main cultural types. In “mastery” cultures, individuals have a need or responsibility to control nature; in “subjugation” cultures, individuals submit to nature; and in “harmony” cultures, individuals work with nature to keep harmony or balance. The second dimension focuses on the degree to which striving for goals is important. “Being” cultures stress spontaneous expression of the human personality; “becoming” cultures stress developing oneself as an integrated whole; and “doing” cultures stress acting on the environment to produce accomplishments.

Hofstede’s (1980) dimension, “masculinity” and “femininity,” focuses on the extent to which cultures stress achievement or quality of life and personal relationships. Masculine cultures value assertiveness, success, progress, achievement, and control over the environment. Feminine cultures, on the other hand, value modesty, relationships,

harmony with the environment, and quality of life. Hofstede argues that a preference for achievement or harmony is related to the role often dictated of men and women in societies. Masculine (achievement oriented) societies also show higher emotional and role differentiation between men and women than feminine societies.

Building on Rotter's (1966) model of locus of control, Trompenaars (1993) distinguishes between inner-directed and outer-directed goal behavior. In inner-directed cultures, individuals believe they can and should control nature, imposing their will on it. In outer-directed cultures, by contrast, individuals believe that societies exist as a part of nature and should largely adapt to it.

Schwartz (1994) suggests that cultures vary in the degree to which individuals seek to master and at times change the natural and social world. Schwartz identified two types of culture: mastery and harmony. In "mastery" cultures, individuals value getting ahead through self-assertion and seek to change the natural and social world to advance personal or group interests. In "harmony" cultures, individuals accept the world as it is and try to preserve it rather than exploit it. Harmony cultures value adapting to the environment.

Finally, GLOBE (House *et al.*, 2004) suggests three interrelated dimensions that may be subsumed under goal orientation: assertiveness, performance orientation, and humane orientation. "Assertiveness" refers to the degree to which individuals in organizations or societies are assertive, tough, dominant, and aggressive in social relationships. "Performance orientation" reflects the extent to which a community encourages and rewards innovation, high standards, and performance improvement. Finally, "humane orientation" reflects the degree to which society encourages individuals for being fair, altruistic, friendly, generous, caring, and kind to others.

A comparison of these models suggests more agreement than disagreement. In general, it is well established that cultures vary in how individuals relate to nature and to one another. The disagreement lies in whether these dimensions are independent or not. While Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) and GLOBE suggest that there are a group of independent dimensions to account for these

**Table 1.11 Mastery-harmony dimension**

Mastery	Harmony
Focus on changing or controlling one's natural and social environment.	Focus on living in harmony with nature and adjusting to the natural and social environment.
Achievement valued over relationships.	Relationships valued over achievement.
Emphasis on competition in the pursuit of personal or group goals.	Emphasis on social progress, quality of life, and the welfare of others.
Embraces change and unquestioned innovation.	Defends traditions; skepticism towards change.
Emphasis on material possessions as symbols of achievement.	Emphasis on economy, harmony, and modesty.
Emphasis on assertive, proactive, "masculine" approach.	Emphasis on passive, reactive, "feminine" approach.
Preference for performance-based extrinsic rewards.	Preference for seniority-based intrinsic rewards.

behaviors, Hofstede (1980), Trompenaars (1993), and Schwartz (1994) integrate these behaviors into one cultural dimension. We argue that, for purposes of better understanding organization and management across cultures, it is logical to focus on a small number of critical dimensions that account for most of managerial behavior instead of cutting the cultural pie into several smaller slices.

For this reason, we follow Schwartz's (1994) approach and use *mastery* and *harmony* as representative of cultures that vary in the extent to which they seek achievement and control over the natural and social world or accommodation with it. Table 1.11 compares mastery and harmony cultures, integrating the findings from the researchers reviewed above.

### Monochronism vs. polychronism

Five of the six models reviewed regard a society's time orientation as an important cultural variable. While there is widespread agreement that societies vary considerably in how they view or use time, there is less convergence concerning which perception of time is most salient. That is, some culture models focus on the degree to which cultures

plan for and focus on the future (House, 2004; Hofstede, 2001; Kluckhohn, 1961), while others focus on how to receive the flow of time (Hall, 1959; Kluckhohn and Hampden-Turner, 1998). Moreover, there is a convergence of opinion that the aspect of time is most important. There is little agreement concerning which aspect should be measured.

Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) suggest that "past-oriented" cultures focus on the past, present-oriented cultures value present, and "future-oriented" cultures value future. "Present-oriented" cultures pay little attention to what happens in the future. "Future-oriented" cultures think the future is vague and unpredictable. "Past-oriented" cultures focus on a better future and avoiding traditional change and avoiding traditional change. "Past-oriented" societies use the past as a guide; present-oriented societies solve problems without regard for the past; and "future-oriented" societies focus on the future.

Hofstede, in his work with Schwartz (1994), classifies cultures in terms of time orientation, focusing on the extent to which individuals stress working for today or working for the future. "Long-term oriented" cultures value personal sacrifice for future benefit, hard work, and personal thrift. "Short-term oriented" cultures stress the present, focusing on the past or present, stressing the present and fulfillment of one's needs. "Long-term oriented" cultures value over-achievement or investments in the future.

The GLOBE project (House *et al.*, 2004) measures the degree to which a society values "future-oriented" behaviors, such as saving and delaying gratification. Hofstede and Bond's (1988) and Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's (1961) concept of "future orientation" is an alternative to future orientation in terms of tradition or learning from the past. Hofstede and Bond's (1988) model of economic success, maladjustment in organizations, and psychological well-being of individuals. Hall (1959) took a different approach to characterize time. He suggested that time is related to organizing work and that some cultures tend to approach

plan for and focus on the future (House *et al.*, 2004; Hofstede, 2001; Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, 1961), while others focus on how individuals perceive the flow of time (Hall, 1959; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1998). Moreover, even when there is a convergence of opinions about which aspect of time is most important to study, there is little agreement concerning how the dimension should be measured.

Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) suggest that cultures focus on the past, present, or future. "Past oriented" cultures value preserving or restoring traditions of the past. "Present oriented" cultures pay little attention to what happened in the past and think the future is vague and unpredictable. "Future oriented" cultures focus on a better future, stressing change and avoiding traditional ways. In planning, past oriented societies use the past to anticipate the future; present oriented societies resolve current problems without regard for the future; and future oriented societies focus on the long-term implications of past and present actions.

Hofstede, in his work with Michael Bond (1991), classifies cultures in short- or long-term oriented, focusing on the extent to which cultures stress working for today or working for tomorrow. "Long-term oriented" cultures value hard work, personal sacrifice for future benefits, dedication to a cause, and personal thrift. The emphasis is on sacrifice so that future generations can prosper. By contrast, "short-term oriented" cultures focus more on the past or present, stressing respect for traditions and fulfillment of one's social obligations over achievement or investments.

The GLOBE project (House *et al.*, 2004) focuses on the degree to which a society encourages and rewards "future-oriented behaviors" such as planning and delaying gratification. However, in contrast to Hofstede and Bond's (1991) and Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's (1961) conceptualizations, their alternative to future orientation is not an emphasis on tradition or learning from the past, but rather low economic success, maladaptive managers and organizations, and psychologically unhealthy individuals. Hall (1959) took a very different approach to characterize time. He discusses time as it relates to organizing work activities, noting that some cultures tend to approach work activities

**Table 1.12 Monochronism-polychronism dimension**

Monochronic	Polychronic
Sequential attention to individual tasks.	Simultaneous attention to multiple tasks.
Linear, single-minded approach to work, planning, and implementation.	Nonlinear, interactive approach to work, planning, and implementation.
Precise concept of time; punctual.	Relative concept of time; often late.
Approach is job-centered; commitment to the job and often to the organization.	Approach is people-centered; commitment to people and human relationships.
Separation of work and personal life.	Integration of work and personal life.
Approach to work is focused and impatient.	Approach to work is unfocused and patient.

in a linear or single-minded fashion, referred to as "monochronic," while others approach multiple tasks simultaneously, referred to as "polychronic." Finally, Trompenaars' approach is a blend of the earlier models, suggesting that one's time orientation (past, present, or future) influences the degree to which people approach tasks sequentially or simultaneously.

While all of these approaches add value to the study of cultural differences, we believe that, from a managerial standpoint, Hall's approach of distinguishing between *monochronic* and *polychronic* cultures seems most useful. In a sense, concerns with the future are closely related to needs for achievement and assumptions of control. Cultures that believe the future is their own doing are more likely to stress planning and future orientation than cultures that believe they cannot affect the turn of events. These cultures are more likely to focus on living the present. In our view, the central point in understanding time orientation is whether people approach their work one task at a time in a somewhat linear fashion or attempt to perform multiple tasks simultaneously (see table 1.12). Do people have a precise concept of time and tend to be very punctual or do they have a relative concept and tend to be late? Do they need a steady flow of information to do their job? Are people more committed to their jobs or

to family and friends? Do they separate work and family life or see them as an integrated whole? Do they take a linear or nonlinear approach to planning? And, finally, are they focused and impatient or unfocused and patient?

### Universalism-particularism

Finally, one of the more intractable dimensions found in current culture models involves the issue of rules as a means of reducing uncertainty in society. Here there is less agreement across the models. For example, both Hofstede (1980) and GLOBE (House *et al.*, 2004) call this dimension "uncertainty avoidance." However, Hofstede focuses principally on the degree to which societies can tolerate uncertainty and use rules to control personal behavior, while GLOBE focuses on the degree to which societies attempt to reduce uncertainty through rules and regulations. Meanwhile, Trompenaars (1993) follows Parsons and Shills' (1951) classic work and focuses on the relative importance of rules vs. relationships. They all tend to agree, however, that the various social, ideological, and behavioral mechanisms by which social control manifests itself in a society represents an important aspect of culture.

In this regard, we suggest that rather than comparing cultures on the extent to which they attempt to ignore or tolerate uncertainty, it is better to compare cultures based on how they try and deal with it. How cultures deal with uncertainty is largely influenced by other cultural dimensions, including the mechanisms of social control. We believe society's views on rules and rules enforcement is a critical culture dimensions because it influences how cultures cope with uncertainty as well as other critical managerial action.

In *universalistic*, or rule-based, cultures, there is a tendency to promulgate a multitude of laws, rules, regulations, bureaucratic procedures, and strict social norms in an attempt to control as many unanticipated events or behaviors as possible. People tend to conform to officially sanctioned constraints because of a moral belief in the virtue of the rule of law, and will often obey directives

even if they know violations will not be detected. Waiting for a red light in the absence of any traffic is a good example here. Rules and laws are universally applied (at least in theory), with few exceptions for extenuating circumstances or personal connections. There is a strong belief in the use of formal contracts and rigorous record keeping in business dealings. Things are done "by the book" and infractions often bring immediate sanctions or consequences. Finally, decisions tend to be made based on objective criteria to the extent possible. All of this is aimed at creating a society with no surprises. Germany, the Netherlands, the Scandinavian countries, the US, and Canada are often identified as rule-based cultures.

By contrast, *particularistic*, or relationship-based, cultures tend to use influential people more than abstract or objective rules and regulations as a means of social control. This social control can come from parents, peers, superiors, supervisors, government officials, and so forth – anyone with influence over the individual. In this sense, relationship-based cultures tend to be particularistic and individual circumstances often influence the manner in which formal rules are applied. In addition, greater emphasis is placed on developing mutually beneficial interpersonal relationships and trust as a substitute for strict rules and procedures. There is generally less record keeping and things tend to be done on an informal basis. There is also greater tolerance for non-compliance with bureaucratic rules in the belief that formal rules cannot cover all contingencies and that some flexibility is often required. Finally, decisions tend to be made based on a combination of objective and subjective criteria and with less formality. Russia, Greece, Venezuela, Italy, Portugal, and Spain are often cited as examples.

This is not to say that particularistic cultures do not value laws and official procedures; they do. Rather, laws and procedures are often followed only to the extent that one's social network embraces them and sees either the virtue or necessity of following them, not because of some innate belief in their moral correctness, as is the case with rule-based cultures. Where predictability of behavior is important, it is motivated largely through

Table 1.13 Universalism-particularism

Universalistic
Individual behavior largely regulated by formal policies, standard operating norms that are widely supported and applied uniformly to everyone.
Rule-based.
Emphasis on legal contracts and keeping.
Rules and procedures spelled out widely.
Rules are internalized and followed.
Do things formally by the book.
Low tolerance for rule breaking.
Decisions based largely on objective criteria.

relationships, not contracts, and mutual support between parties. Differences are summarized

### Country clusters and cultural dimensions

A major challenge in working across cultures is determining how to manage such differences for purposes of development. Some researchers, such as Hofstede and Trompenaars, have provided numeric scores for each of these dimensions. However, converting these numeric scores into qualitative terms is an important task. Cultures by definition are qualitative, and attempts to attach numeric scores to cultures only invite errors and misunderstandings. Moreover, cultures are not monolithic; they consist of people who are different. Even if central tendencies exist between various nationalities, we may describe people from a relatively individualistic and relatively collectivistic, man are highly collectivistic and highly individualistic. It is on

**Table 1.13 Universalism-particularism dimension**

Universalistic	Particularistic
Individual behavior largely regulated by rules, laws, formal policies, standard operating procedures, and social norms that are widely supported by societal members and applied uniformly to everyone.	While rules and laws are important, they often require modifications in their application or enforcement by influential people (e.g., parents, peers, superiors, government officials) or unique circumstances.
Rule-based.	Relationship-based.
Emphasis on legal contracts and meticulous record keeping.	Emphasis on interpersonal relationships and trust; less emphasis on record keeping.
Rules and procedures spelled out clearly and published widely.	Rules and procedures often ambiguous or not believed or accepted.
Rules are internalized and followed without question.	Rules are sometimes ignored or followed only when strictly enforced.
Do things formally by the book.	Do things through informal networks.
Low tolerance for rule breaking.	Tolerance for rule breaking.
Decisions based largely on objective criteria (e.g., rules, policies).	Decisions often based on subjective criteria (e.g., hunches, personal connections).

contacts, not contracts, and interpersonal trust and mutual support between partners is critical. These differences are summarized in table 1.13.

### Country clusters and core cultural dimensions

A major challenge in working with cultural differences is determining how best to assess or measure such differences for purposes of research and theory development. Some culture models, like Hofstede and Trompenaars, offer country-specific numeric scores for each of their cultural dimensions. However, converting cultural differences into numeric scores is an imprecise science at best. Cultures by definition are qualitative, not quantitative, and attempts to attach numbers to various cultures only invite errors and misunderstandings. Moreover, cultures are not monolithic; each culture consists of people who are different in many ways even if central tendencies can be differentiated between various nationalities. For example, while we may describe people from the United States as relatively individualistic and people from Japan as relatively collectivistic, many Americans in fact are highly collectivistic and many Japanese are highly individualistic. It is only a matter of degree

and central tendencies that differentiate between the two cultures.

Despite this limitation, several researchers have made serious attempts to attach numbers to various cultures in order to facilitate country comparisons. Without such numbers, it is argued, comparisons by both researchers and managers become problematic. However, these ratings are based on research methods that have been widely criticized, and the accuracy of the results has frequently been questioned (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1998; House *et al.*, 2004). Indeed, many of the estimates for specific countries do not agree with each another. For example, while Hofstede assigns Italy a score of 76 on individualism-collectivism (highly collectivistic), Trompenaars assigns it a 20 (moderately collectivistic). While Hofstede (2001) assigns Germany a score of 35 (egalitarian) on power distance, House and his associates (2004) assign it a 5.25 (hierarchical). Moreover, some country estimates by the same researchers change over time. For example, Trompenaars (1993; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1998) rated Thailand as individualistic in his first assessment, but collectivistic in his second. Such errors call into question the validity of the entire rating system.

An alternative to quantitative measures is qualitative, or ethnographic, measures. But problems

exist here too, largely due to potential rater bias in developing both the models and measures. While cultural anthropologists have made earnest attempts to differentiate across cultures using ethnographic or qualitative methods, room for errors persists due to possible cultural biases of the evaluators. For instance, a US born, US educated anthropologist will likely view the world (and hence different cultures) through American eyes, and may possibly overlook important cultural traits because he or she is not looking for them. Indeed, this occurred when Michael Bond and Peter Smith (1996) first noted that looking at cultures through an east Asian perspective led to the identification of different cultural dimensions for purposes of assessment. This human bias in assessment and analysis is itself a natural outcome of cultural differences. As a result, as with quantitative assessments, ethnographic or qualitative measures of cultural differences do not always agree with one another.

In order to operationalize the core cultural dimensions presented here, it is necessary to have a means of classifying cultures so country – or at least regional – comparisons can be made. Mindful of the limitations discussed above, we chose to estimate cultural differences within country clusters (as opposed to individual countries) by adapting a model originally proposed by Ronan and Shenkar (1985). This model focused on identifying regions where ample anthropological data were available, and our use of these clusters reflects this imbalance. Some regions (e.g., Central Asia, Polynesia) are not included, while others (e.g., Europe) are covered in considerable detail. (Our hope is that future research will address this imbalance.) In addition, according to Ronan and Shenkar, several countries (e.g., Brazil, India, and Israel) do not easily fit into such a framework, so again some caution is in order. With these cautions in mind, we used the Ronan and Shenkar model to identify nine country clusters for which sufficient data were available to estimate central tendencies in cultural characteristics: Anglo cluster (e.g., Australia, Canada, UK, USA); Arab cluster (Dubai, Egypt, Saudi Arabia); eastern European cluster (e.g., Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland); east/southeast Asian cluster (e.g., China, Japan, Korea, Singapore, Thailand); Germanic cluster (e.g., Austria, Germany); Latin

American cluster (e.g., Argentina, Costa Rica, Mexico); Latin European cluster (e.g., France, Italy, Spain); Nordic cluster (e.g., Denmark, Norway, Sweden); and Sub-Sahara African cluster (e.g., Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria).

Based on these country clusters, and using multiple measures and multiple methods to the extent possible, we then assessed and integrated a combination of quantitative and qualitative measures from available research in order to categorize cultures along the five dimensions. First, existing quantitative measures from such researchers as Hofstede, Trompenaars, and House and associates were examined and compared. Next, ethnographic data compiled largely from cultural anthropology focusing on specific cultures or geographic regions were incorporated into the analysis and compared against the quantitative findings. Finally, remaining points of disagreement were discussed between the co-authors and other researchers in an effort to reach a consensus on the final ratings. While it is not claimed that this procedure eliminated all errors, it is felt that it represents a superior method to the previous reliance on single-source data. Still, room for error persists, in particular due to the potential rater bias of the authors, and readers are cautioned to use their own judgment in interpreting results.

In making our assessments, we chose to develop a more conservative ordinal rating scale, clustering cultures into four categories (e.g., strongly individualistic, moderately individualistic, moderately collectivistic, and strongly collectivistic) based on the relative strength of the various dimensions compared to other cultures, instead of attempting to calculate specific numeric ratings that may appear to be more precise than they actually are. The results are shown in table 1.14. Note that these are only rough estimates based on available research. While the results shown in the table may appear to be less precise than assigning specific numeric ratings, we believe they are possibly both more accurate and useful because they assume a more conservative stance in data analysis and are based on multiple data points. Finally, in making use of the information presented here, it is important to recognize that no point on any assessment scale is preferred over any other; they are simply different.

Table 1.14 Central tendencies of

Country Clusters	Hierarchy-Equality
Anglo	Moderate egalitarian
Arab	Strongly hierarchical
East European	Moderate hierarchical
East/Southeast Asian	Strongly hierarchical
Germanic	Moderate egalitarian
Latin American	Moderate hierarchical
Latin European	Moderate hierarchical
Nordic	Strongly egalitarian
Sub-Saharan African	Strongly hierarchical

Note: The country cluster categories used represent central tendencies for selected countries. Central tendencies can be found in all clusters and not necessarily in all countries. The data are based on a synthesis of substantive data, while other

In interpreting the results shown in table 1.14, it must also be remembered that the cluster summaries can often be misleading. For example, all Anglos are not the same, and all east or southeast Asians are not the same. While it is sometimes necessary to make general comparisons between cultures, the role of regional differences in determining cultural differences should not be overlooked. For example, the Anglo cluster of the world (e.g., Australia, Canada, UK, USA, and Sweden) tend to be more individualistic than the Anglo cluster of the world (e.g., Italy, Spain, France). The same is true of the east/southeast Asian cluster. Living side-by-side with one another and sometimes representing different cultural differences, it is important to remember that, while the cluster summaries may be a useful way of conceptualizing entry into general



**Table 1.14 Central tendencies on core cultural dimensions for country clusters**

Country Clusters	Hierarchy-Equality	Individualism-Collectivism	Mastery-Harmony	Monochronism-Polychronism	Universalism-Particularism
Anglo	Moderately egalitarian	Strongly individualistic	Strongly mastery-oriented	Strongly monochronic	Moderately universalistic
Arab	Strongly hierarchical	Strongly collectivistic	Moderately harmony-oriented	Strongly polychronic	Strongly particularistic
East European	Moderately hierarchical	Moderately collectivistic	Moderately mastery-oriented	Moderately monochronic	Moderately particularistic
East/Southeast Asian	Strongly hierarchical	Strongly collectivistic	Strongly-harmony-oriented	Moderately monochronic	Strongly particularistic
Germanic	Moderately egalitarian	Moderately individualistic	Moderately mastery-oriented	Moderately monochronic	Strongly universalistic
Latin American	Moderately hierarchical	Moderately collectivistic	Moderately harmony-oriented	Strongly polychronic	Strongly particularistic
Latin European	Moderately hierarchical	Moderately collectivistic	Moderately harmony-oriented	Moderately polychronic	Moderately particularistic
Nordic	Strongly egalitarian	Moderately collectivistic	Moderately harmony-oriented	Moderately monochronic	Strongly universalistic
Sub-Saharan African	Strongly hierarchical	Strongly collectivistic	Moderately harmony-oriented	Moderately polychronic	Strongly particularistic

*Note:* The country cluster categories used here were adapted from Ronan and Shenkar (1985). The core cultural dimension (CCD) ratings represent central tendencies for selected country clusters (see text for details). Variations, sometimes substantial, around these central tendencies can be found in all clusters and countries. Also note that some regions of the globe (e.g., Central Asia) are not included here due to an absence of substantive data, while others (e.g., Europe) are represented in some detail due to the availability of sufficient data.

In interpreting the results shown in table 1.14, it must also be remembered that significant within-cluster variance can often be found. For example, as noted earlier, all Anglos are not individualistic, while all east or southeast Asians are not collectivistic. While it is sometimes necessary to focus on central tendencies between cultures for purposes of general comparisons, the role of individual and regional differences in determining attitudes and behaviors should not be overlooked. Still, it should not be surprising that cultural ratings for countries in the same cluster of the world (e.g., Denmark, Norway, and Sweden) tend to be closer than ratings for countries located in a different cluster of the world (e.g., Italy, Spain, France). This is a natural consequence of contiguous countries in various regions living side-by-side with their neighbors over centuries and sometimes millennia. Still, important cultural differences can be found across peoples inhabiting a particular region. Finally, it is important to remember that, while these cultural dimensions may be a useful shortcut for gaining conceptual entry into general cultural trends

across countries and regions, they are in no way a substitute for more systematic in-depth analyses as they relate to the study of culture, work, and organizations.

### Directions for future research

In this paper, we propose a vehicle for understanding cultural differences based on the previous work of Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, Hofstede, Hall, Trompenaars, Schwartz, and the GLOBE researchers. We further suggest that in order to facilitate future research and cross-cultural comparisons it is useful to integrate and consolidate existing – if sometimes divergent – models of national cultures. While previous researchers have introduced various cultural dimensions, we conclude from our comparative analysis that five specific dimensions – referred to here as core cultural dimensions – are particularly salient for understanding management practices in different cultures. In our view, these five dimensions account for most of the conceptual

variance across cultures and help researchers escape from the culture theory jungle – a proliferation of theories that needlessly forces researchers to choose whose side they are on prior to initiating a research project. The five dimensions presented here were derived from a comparative analysis and integration of six competing theories and represent what to us is a useful strategy for reducing the confusion caused by both the overlap and differences across models.

However, any attempted integration such as ours obviously requires further study and validation. Cultural dimensions by their very nature are inter-related and, while they may make sense as a collective whole, each dimension may lose its relevance or even meaning when studied individually or out of context. As such, more research of a comprehensive or integrative nature is called for. Moreover, as is evident from our review, there is widespread agreement among existing models about the themes of the various dimensions, but less agreement about the details of what some of these dimensions actually mean. Below we propose some specific areas for future research within each of the core cultural dimensions discussed above:

1. *Hierarchy–equality.* Variations in power orientation have received considerable attention in recent research. Moreover, a review of this research suggests that this dimension enjoys the most agreement across the various models. The question that remains unanswered, however, is the extent to which power orientation and group orientation are independent dimensions or are closely related and, if so, how? Again, Triandis (1986) laid the foundation for this issue, but more work is needed. In particular, future research may focus on investigating the relationship between power orientation and rule orientation. These dimensions appear to be correlated and further investigation teasing out the role of rules, relationships, and social structure into power distribution are likely to shed light into the relationship of the several culture dimensions and their influence on behavior.
2. *Individualism–collectivism.* There has already been considerable research on individualism–

collectivism. Of particular note here is the work of Triandis (1994), who refined this construct and then tested his approach in fifteen countries. He found seven factors that relate to this dimension: self-reliance and independence, competition, hedonism, interdependence, family integrity, closeness to in-groups, and sociability. The first three were related to individualism and the last four to collectivism. He suggested that collectivism and individualism were polythetic constructs, meaning that there were various kinds of individualism and collectivism. He suggested further that four dimensions were universal attributes of the constructs of individualism and collectivism: (1) definition of the self: independent versus interdependent; (2) structure of goals: compatible with in-group goals, independent of in-group goals; (3) emphasis on norms versus attitudes: social behavior is determined by norms, duties and obligations (collectivism) or attitudes, personal needs, perceived rights and contracts (individualism); and (4) emphasis on relatedness versus rationality: collectivists emphasize relatedness, giving priority to relationships and taking into consideration the needs of others even when the relationships are not advantageous. Individualists emphasize rationality, and calculate the cost benefits associated with relationships. Based on this research, Triandis argued that societies vary in the extent in which the differences among people are minimized or emphasized. In homogeneous cultures people do not want to stand out, while in heterogeneous societies being different is emphasized. Future research may wish to focus on a more explicit examination of how this critical dimension relates to other cultural dimensions, again looking to how the various dimensions that collectively comprise culture work together to influence attitudes and behaviors.

3. *Mastery–harmony.* As noted above, this cultural dimension refers to people's beliefs concerning the degree of their control over the natural and the social world. However, clarifying exactly what this dimension means is not easy. For example, earlier models diverge in the extent to which people's

need for achievement should be a cultural dimension. It is important to tease out this dimension and the degree to which beliefs concerning achievement are actually related. At the same time, future research should investigate the relationship between general cultural dimensions and perceptions of achievement. Previous research has suggested that important cultural variables include differences in assumptions of control, power distribution, or even the cultural dimension. We believe this is an area for future research.

4. *Monochronism–polychronism.* Future research should investigate the relationship between perceptions of the flow of time and an organized (i.e. the monochronic distinction) and unorganized (i.e. the polychronic distinction) present, and future, short-term and long-term views of time and time management? It seems that while we agree there is an important relationship between these views of time and time management, in how individuals perceive time and time management, future research is more important. Future research should focus on refining the time dimension and its relationship among several dimensions.
5. *Universalism–particularism.* Future research is needed to validate the relationship between these dimensions. We have argued that rationality is more salient to homogeneous cultures on how they perceive uncertainty. It is more salient to heterogeneous cultures to deal with rules which, in turn, they deal with uncertainty. Future research, using culture models, those proposed by Triandis (1986) and the GLOBE project (1990) and the GLOBE project (1990) should investigate that cultures vary in the extent to which they avoid uncertainty. While we believe this is not a culture dimension, it is better explained by other cultural variables, we recognize that there are significant variations in the way cultures cope with uncertainty. We suggest that each of the themes proposed here influence

need for achievement should be included in this dimension or whether this represents a separate cultural dimension. Future research needs to tease out this dimension and explore the degree to which beliefs about control and need for achievement are actually correlated. At the same time, future research should examine the relationship between gender differences across cultures and perceptions of control. While previous research has suggested that there are important cultural variations regarding gender differences, it is not clear if they relate to assumptions of control, need for achievement, power distribution, or even possibly a separate cultural dimension. We believe this is a fruitful area for future research.

4. *Monochronism–polychronism.* Future research should investigate the relationship between perceptions of the flow of time and how tasks are organized (i.e. the monochronic and polychronic distinction) and perceptions of past, present, and future, short and long term. Are these views of time independent or interconnected? It seems that while most researchers agree there is an important cultural component in how individuals perceive time, there are disagreements concerning which aspects of time are more important. Future research should focus on refining the time dimension studying the relationships among several aspects of time.
5. *Universalism–particularism.* Significant research is needed to validate this dimension. We have argued that rather than comparing cultures on how they perceive uncertainty, it is more salient to compare them on how they deal with rules which, in turn, influence how they deal with uncertainty. Two important culture models, those proposed by Hofstede (1980) and the GLOBE project (2004), suggest that cultures vary in the degree to which they avoid uncertainty. While we think uncertainty is not a culture dimension as it is an experience better explained by other more consequential culture variables, we recognize that there are significant variations in how individuals perceive and cope with uncertainty across cultures. We suggest that each of the five main cultural themes proposed here influences perceptions of

uncertainty. For instance, mastery cultures are more likely to try to change the environment to reduce uncertainty than harmony cultures. Moreover, the degree to which individuals see themselves as autonomous or embedded in groups may influence how collectives organize to cope with common uncertainties. The way in which power, status, and authority in a society are distributed is likely to influence the degree to which individuals take responsibility for uncertain events or rely on the guidance, opinion, or protection of superiors. Additionally, time perceptions may influence the timing in which uncertainty is perceived and action is taken. In summary, we suggest that instead of classifying cultures according to their tolerance or ways of dealing with uncertainty, it makes more sense to focus on social control. Social control, as well as other cultural dimensions, influences how cultures cope with uncertainty. Future research should explore how each cultural dimension influences perceptions and ways of dealing with uncertainty.

As indicated in this paper, much remains to be done to understand in a more comprehensive way the etiology of cultural differences as they relate to management practice. In this pursuit, researchers must of necessity come to terms with the fundamentally flawed and imprecise nature of both their theories and their data. In the near term – if not also the long term – accurate data in support of research will frequently be difficult to collect and analyze and, since theory-building and empirical research go hand-in-hand, theoretical development itself will often be constrained. In the meantime, in our view, researchers must rely on personal insight and intuition, reflection, and collaboration, not just in what they believe to be “hard” data, if they are to make genuine progress on this important topic. We believe that the existing models in the field, individually and collectively, represent useful and constructive efforts towards this end. Our hope is that future researchers will attempt to build on these signal contributions instead of merely criticizing them. In our view, cross-cultural organizational research is and must remain a synergistic and collaborative endeavor.

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