# Chapter 2
# The Impact of Culture in Multicultural Teams

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> *One has to recognize that countries and people differ in their approach and their ways of living and thinking. In order to understand them we have to understand their way of life and approach. If we wish to convince them, we have to use their language as far as we can, not language in the narrow sense of the word, but the language of the mind.*
>
> –Jawaharlal Nehru

## Introduction

Japan is widely recognized for its success as an economic power. Despite some of the challenges in the last few years, it remains one of the world's largest economies. The chances are that most of us have used, seen, and heard of Japanese brands ranging from automobiles to consumer electronics. Lesser known to the outside world but equally impressive is Japan's highly service-oriented society domestically. This national and global success has been intriguing the rest of the world. The last 20 years have seen the adapting of Japanese management and organizational practices in small manufacturing plants in Asia to the assembly lines of American automobile giants such as General Motors. Many observers directly attribute Japan's success to Japanese cultural values and the emphasis on teamwork. At the same time, Japanese organizations have been open to adapting and embracing some Western-style managerial practices. A major consequence of these developments is that in many of these international settings multicultural teams are attempting to work effectively where Japanese and other cultures may be significantly impacting the teamwork.

   Cultural values can deeply affect organizational and team structure, rewards and motivation, interpersonal interactions, decision making, and effectiveness. Chapter 1 highlighted some of the broad ways in which culture impacts and manifests the working of teams at organizational, team, and individual levels. When an organization consists of individuals with the same value orientations, policies and procedures follow naturally and smoothly, and expectations are mutually understood. When an organization consists of individuals with different value orientations, three

possibilities exist: the organization can lack awareness of the differing value orientations or their significance and proceed with the orientations of the dominant group; the differences can be acknowledged and made explicit but those in the minority forced to assimilate; or the differences can be acknowledged and pluralistic norms developed that meet the needs of all. These and related approaches will be discussed in subsequent chapters. In this chapter we will look at the notion of culture and cultural influences on multicultural team dynamics.

## Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Define culture and recognize the challenges involved in defining it
- Describe selected cultural values frameworks used to conceptualize and compare cultures
- Describe an integrated framework for explaining and understanding behavior in multicultural teams

## Defining Culture: The Challenges Involved

Culture is a complex and fuzzy phenomenon, and it is difficult to encompass its richness and intricacies in a single definition. Early attempts at defining it were too broad to be operationalized easily. Capturing the breadth of the concept while at the same time narrowing it so that it is useful—in the words of Clifford Geertz (1973), making it a "more powerful concept"—has been a major focus of anthropological theorizing for decades. The various narrower definitions have taken different directions, and theorists have not reached agreement on any one definition.

The question then is, how do we tackle the concept of culture for our purposes in this book? We need both a working definition of culture relevant to the context of multicultural teams, and a practical framework for conceptualizing it in order to examine its impact on multicultural teams. It seems to me it is unnecessary to reinvent the wheel here when we can offer a workable definition drawing upon earlier work. Let us now explore some ways of defining and understanding the notion of culture and its related complexities.

Redfield (1948), as quoted in Triandis (2004), defined culture as "shared understandings made manifest in act and artifact" (p. vii). According to Triandis (2004), "This (definition) is consistent with the definition used by the GLOBE[1] research project, which examines culture as practices and values." Practices are acts or "the

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[1] GLOBE refers to the Global Leadership & Organizational Behavior project.

way things are done in this culture," and values are artifacts because they are human-made and, in this specific case, are judgments about "the way things should be done." The issue of defining culture is further complicated by the fact that culture is dynamic and constantly changing. Certainly technology, such as the introduction of automobiles, home computers, email, and electricity, has had profound effects. The move from agricultural societies to industrialized societies and rural to urban has resulted in changed conceptions about gender roles, time, and space. The change from industrialized to information societies has resulted in changes in communications patterns and approaches, and in concepts of time. Additionally, cultural inter-mingling due to such factors as colonization, diasporas (which have scattered groups such as Africans and Jews), and immigration has impacted culture.

Connaughton and Shuffer (2007) observe that most existing classifications of culture according to national origin may not fully represent the "mobile nature of contemporary populations who relocate for professional, economic and social reasons" (p. 397). Smith (2002) states "…they [national cultures] seem to me to be increasingly characterized by numerous and mutually contradictory trends and sources of influence, to the point where one no longer needs to treat culture as a hold-all concept." Smith's observations emphasize that it is hard to describe the culture of a society in the midst of change; norms, rules, rituals, and practices are not set, and there is a lot of confusion and disorientation.

Chao and Moon (2005) offer a meta-framework to highlight these complexities and also provide a way to conceptualize culture in a meaningful and practical fashion. Their approach includes a three-component taxonomy labeled the Cultural Mosaic. According to this framework, an individual's cultural identity results from interactions among demographic (age, gender, race, ethnicity), geographic (country/regional, urban/rural, climate) and associational (family, religion, profession, politics) dimensions.

This meta-framework overlaps with the notion of a tri-lens that we are using in this book. The cultural lens overlaps with a geographic component; the social identity lens overlaps with demographic and associational components. This framework addresses some of the complexities related to understanding the impact of culture on human behavior and interactions noted above. The Cultural Mosaic framework emphasizes that culture includes societal differences at the national level and in addition also incorporates differences rooted in ethnicity, gender, religion, and profession.

Two definitions reported by Connaughton and Shuffer (2007) are particularly relevant in forming a useful working definition. Maznevski and Chudoba (in Connaughton and Shuffer 2007) define culture as "…the set of deep-level values associated with societal effectiveness, shared by an identifiable group pf people." Gibson and Gibbs (in Connaughton and Shuffer 2007) define it as "characteristic ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving shared among members of an identifiable group."

Building on all these ideas, I offer the following definition:

> Culture consists of shared ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving rooted in deep-level values and symbols associated with societal effectiveness, and attributable to an identifiable group of people. Culture may manifest at different levels including national and organizational, may take several forms, and may evolve over time.

This definition recognizes the complex and dynamic nature of the concept and at the same time offers some concrete ways to understand it by focusing on shared patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving.

A useful way to build upon this definition and operationalize it can be found in the cultural values approach, in which cultures are conceptualized and compared in terms of their orientation to certain basic social values such as time, uncertainty, and individualism/collectivism. The remainder of this chapter will focus on the impact of culture on multicultural teams as seen through various cultural values frameworks.

## Cultural Values Frameworks

There have been numerous attempts in the last few decades to conceptualize culture. It will not be possible to review all the major contributions. In deciding which frameworks to discuss here, I used three criteria. Firstly, I examined those ideas and frameworks that have consistently influenced the thinking about how to conceptualize culture and its impact on studying organizational behavior. Secondly, I considered their conceptual and practical relevance to multicultural teams. Thirdly, I paid attention to the frameworks that represented a wide variety of cultural settings and their present realities.

### *Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's Value Framework*

An early study on cultural values was carried out by anthropologists Florence Kluckhohn and Fred Strodtbeck, through their field research with Navajos, Spanish Americans, and Anglo-Americans in the southwestern United States. They drew on the earlier work of Clifford Geertz, which emphasized the importance of cultural values. In *Variations in Value Orientation* (1961), Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck describe a value orientation as

> complex but definitely patterned (rank-ordered) principles, resulting from the transactional interplay of three analytically distinguishable elements of the evaluative process—the cognitive, the affective, and the directive elements—which give order and direction to the ever-flowing stream of human acts and thoughts as these relate to the solution of "common human" problems (p. 4).

Previous work with values by others did not include the directive element, which guides or directs behavior. The Five Value Orientations as conceptualized by Kluckholn and Strodtbeck are described below.

#### Human Nature

This value orientation has to do with how humans are perceived: basically Good, basically Evil, Neutral, or a Mixture of Good and Evil. If one has a perception that humans are basically Evil, there is a lack of trust. At work, people would need to

be heavily monitored and disciplined. If one believes that people are basically Good, trust in team members would be high, even in the early stages of team formation. Probably the most common response for most cultures is that humans are basically a Mixture of Good and Evil.

**Relationship of Humans to Nature**

According to this dimension, there are three ways humans can relate to nature: Subjugation to it, Harmony with it, or Mastery over it. The West has traditionally believed that nature can be mastered by alterations such as dams, building tunnels through mountains, building new lakes, extending life, etc. However, natural disasters such as the 2005 earthquake in Pakistan, the 2004 tsunami in Sri Lanka, and the 2005 hurricane in New Orleans repeatedly remind the world that this approach is unrealistic. There are subgroups in the West, such as environmentalists, who advocate an approach of Harmony with nature. Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck note that this was the dominant orientation in many periods of Chinese history, in Japan, and among the Navajos in the US Southwest. These groups see no distinction between humans and nature. Some indigenous societies believe there is no other course but to subjugate oneself to nature and accept the fate of situations such as floods, pests, and illness. The expression Ayorama (It cannot be helped) of the Inuit in Canada reflects this orientation.

**Time**

According to this value dimension, the possible orientations toward time are Past, Present, and Future. All societies must encompass each of these, but they are rank-ordered differently. Cultures that have an orientation of Subjugation to nature also are likely to be oriented toward the Present. They pay little attention to the Past and believe little can be done about the Future, so it is best to focus on the Present. Other cultures rank-order the Past as the most important. Ancestor worship was important. There was the belief that nothing ever happened in the Present or the Future; it all happened in the Past. In Past-oriented cultures, planning and decision-making reflect tradition and what has worked in the Past. Europeans value the Past and tradition more than US Americans, who value the Present and near Future.

**Activity**

The range of variation in human activity is Being, Being-in-Becoming, and Doing. The Doing orientation values accomplishment. This is prevalent in the USA, where a person's value is measured by what he/she does. Standards are objective and external to the person. The Being orientation values a spontaneous expression of impulses and desires, and living in the moment, although Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck

point out that this does not mean pure license. It exists within societal morals, rules, and policies. A person focused on Being wants to experience life as it is. The type of work and relationships with others, not external rewards, motivates employees in these cultures. Being-in-Becoming is also concerned with what the human being is rather than what he or she can accomplish. It is the kind of activity "which has as its goal the development of all aspects of the self as an integrated whole" (p. 17). In Europe, employees generally have at least a 4-week vacation a year, which reflects this orientation.

### Relational

This value orientation pertains to human relations and has three subdivisions: Individualistic, Lineal, and Collateral. All societies and subgroups must pay attention to all of these, but they rank-order them differently. Individualistic societies value individual autonomy over the welfare of the group. Families are more nuclear, and mobility is often high. Lineal refers to the relationship through age and generational differences that gives cultural continuity. There is a definite position in a hierarchy of ordered positions based on hereditary factors. Collateral refers to social status. Relationships are extended to larger household groups and communities in group-oriented societies.

## Hofstede's Value Dimensions

An extremely important cultural framework was advanced by Geert Hofstede in 1980, in his book *Culture's Consequences*, based on extensive multinational survey data comprising 1,660,000 respondents from 40 nations. This work has profoundly impacted the fields of cross-cultural psychology, organizational behavior, and management. In his initial work, Hofstede conceptualized a four-dimension framework for understanding culture across nations. These dimensions were: Individualism-Collectivism (I/C), Power Distance (PD), Masculinity-Femininity (M/F), and Uncertainty Avoidance (UA). Subsequently, Hofstede (1991) added a fifth dimension, Long-Term Orientation (LTO), to his framework.

### Individualism–Collectivism

This dimension is the extent to which needs and aspirations of individuals get priority and importance compared to needs of others and of collectivities. In individualistic cultures, personal autonomy, freedom, individual achievement, and right to privacy are valued. Collectivist cultures emphasize "we" awareness, loyalty to groups and clans, security and order from organizations, and group decisions. Australia and Great Britain are examples of Individualistic societies and Pakistan, Greece, and Peru are perceived to be Collectivist cultures.

**Power Distance**

This is the extent to which differences in status, hierarchy, class, etc., are accepted and preserved. In low-PD cultures, attempts are made to minimize inequality, people in subordinate positions find it easy to access people in superior positions, and equal rights are emphasized. In high-PD societies, power holders are entitled to privileges and power is considered a basic fact of society. Austria and Norway are considered low-PD societies, and Spain and Indonesia are examples of high-PD societies.

**Masculinity–Femininity**

This is the extent to which assertiveness, performance, independence, and role differentiation (by gender, or sex) are valued by societies. In Masculine societies, sex roles are clearly differentiated, individual performance and independence are valued, and visible manliness is acceptable. In Feminine cultures, interdependence and relationships are important, roles are not clearly defined according to sex differences, and quality of life is important. Norway and Finland are considered Feminine cultures and Japan and the USA are examples of Masculine societies.

**Uncertainty Avoidance**

This is the extent to which uncertainty and ambiguity are perceived as a threat in a society. In low-UA societies, there is less emphasis on rules, the younger generation is considered more trusting, emotions are expressed rarely, and deviation is easily tolerated. In high-UA cultures, experts are valued, hard work is considered important, and a strong need for consensus is felt. Canada, the USA, and Hong Kong are considered low-UA cultures, and Argentina and France are considered high-UA cultures.

**Long-Term Orientation**

Following some additional research in collaboration with researchers in East Asia, Hofstede (1991) added the dimension of Long-Term Orientation to his cultural framework. This dimension is concerned with the extent to which societies include a Long-Term Orientation towards tradition and change. Considering these finding in light of the teachings of Confucius, it is argued that Long-Term Orientation cultures emphasize persistence, thrift, and sense of shame, whereas cultures with Short-Term Orientation give more value to personal steadiness and stability.

   Hofstede's work has come under scrutiny and has been criticized for a number of reasons. Since its publication, Hofstede's work has been revised twice, in 1991 and 2001. In these revised editions, Hofstede offered clarifications of his earlier work and also responded to some major critiques. In one critique, Roberts and Boyacigillar (1984) raised concerns about the measurement validity. A number of individuals, including McSweeney (2002), suspect levels of analysis problems with Hofstede's work. Basically, this critique is concerned with the appropriateness of the levels at which data was collected and generalized respectively.

## *Trompenaars' Value Framework*

Another important cultural framework relevant for understanding the impact of culture on organizational practices was developed by Trompenaars and colleagues (e.g., Trompenaars et al. 1996; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 1998). This framework is based on seven dimensions:

### Individualism Versus Communitarism

In Individualistic cultures, there is an emphasis on individual freedom, aspirations, and personal needs. Communitarism emphasizes the needs of the collective. This dimension is similar to the Individualism/Collectivism dimension conceptualized by Hofstede and others.

### Universalism Versus Particularism

Universalist societies are formal in their emphasis on rules and procedures that guide agreements and actions, considering them "sacred." Particularist cultures are less attached to formal rules and procedures and consider relationship and situational contingencies as important determinants of decisions and actions.

### Specific Versus Diffuse

This dimension deals with communications and interactions within societies. Specific cultures approach communication directly, with attention to clarity of words, frankness, and facts. Diffuse cultures approach communication indirectly, considering contextual variables carefully.

### Neutral Versus Affective

In Neutral cultures, emotions are not shown in visible ways, as this is considered to show a lack of self-control. A certain physical distance is maintained by avoiding touching. In Affective cultures, individuals express emotions freely, and interactions are characterized by passion, frequent use of gestures, and physical contact in the form of touching.

### Achievement Versus Ascription

In Achievement-oriented cultures, status and recognition are based on one's competencies and performance. Titles and position in hierarchy are limited in meaning

in themselves. In cultures that value Ascription, the titles and hierarchy are important in themselves. People in higher positions in hierarchy deserve respect and find it easy to access resources and exert influence.

**Attitudes Toward Time**

Past, Present, or Future. Cultures valuing the Past pay a great deal of attention to history, traditions, and established ways of doing things. Present-oriented societies place importance on current circumstances in determining what is appropriate and in making decisions. Future-oriented cultures consider a long-term view in making judgments on what is appropriate, and focus on achievement of future goals.

**Internal Versus External Control**

Societies valuing Internal Control view individual action and effort to have a large ability to influence and control outcomes, and External Control-oriented cultures consider external circumstances and factors to play an important role in determining outcomes.

## Schwartz's Value Framework

Another important framework that has made useful contributions to conceptualizing culture is a value survey developed by Shalom Schwartz. Schwartz studied the value orientations from several cultures using multiple perspectives (Schwartz 1992, 1994). According to Hanges and Dickson (2004), Schwartz's work has two major strengths: (1) It is theory-driven and based on understanding the philosophical, religious, and empirical literatures from different cultures and societies (Smith and Schwartz 1997); and (2) it carefully considers prior works on culture and builds on them—for example, works by Kluckhohn (1951) and Rockeach(1973).

Schwartz identified seven cultural value dimensions for examining differences across societies: Embeddedness, Affective Autonomy, Intellectual Autonomy, Hierarchy, Egalitarianism, Mastery, and Harmony (Schwartz 1994; Schwartz and Melech 2000). See Table 2.1.

## House and Colleagues' GLOBE Cultural Framework

Robert House, at the University of Pennsylvania, initiated a major research project called Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE, House et al. 2004) to study the impact of culture on leadership and organizational behavior

**Table 2.1** Schwartz's cultural value dimensions

| Value dimensions | Definitions |
| --- | --- |
| Embeddedness | The extent to which societies value traditional ways and status quo, such as respect for tradition and social order |
| Affective autonomy | The extent to which individuals within a society feel free to express emotions and feelings |
| Intellectual autonomy | The extent to which societies encourage and safeguard freedom and choice in intellectual pursuits |
| Hierarchy | The extent to which societies tolerate (and protect) differences in power, hierarchy, and allocation of resources |
| Egalitarianism | The extent to which societies value and demonstrate concern for the welfare of others |
| Mastery | The extent to which societies encourage active participation to change (improve) the prevailing environment |
| Harmony | The extent to which societies emphasize the need for and importance of harmony with the natural and social world |

practices. The project team comprised 172 researchers who gathered data from 17,300 respondents in 951 organizations across 62 societies. Following works of Hofstede (1980, 1991), Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961), and McClelland (1985), among others, this project conceptualized nine dimensions of culture, shown in Table 2.2. The table uses definitions of these dimensions presented by Javidan et al. (2004).

This work is quite comprehensive and thorough at two levels. Firstly, it offers linkages between three well-established frameworks to understand the cultural implications on human behavior. Secondly, the research approach and methodology focused on careful linkages between theory and practice. For example, during the data collection phase, respondents were asked to report on leadership practices in their societal contexts.

**Table 2.2** The GLOBE project cultural dimensions

| GLOBE cultural dimensions | Definitions |
| --- | --- |
| Power distance | The extent to which members of a society expect power to be distributed equally |
| Gender egalitarianism | The degree to which societies discourage differences in gender roles and inequality |
| Uncertainty avoidance | The extent to which societies rely on rules, policies, and procedures to minimize ambiguity and unpredictability of future events |
| Collectivism I (institutional collectivism) | The degree to which societies encourage and reward collective action and distribution of resources |
| Collectivism II (in-group collectivism) | The extent to which members of a society express pride, loyalty, and cohesiveness in their relationship with others |
| Future orientation | The degree to which members of a society engage in future-oriented behaviors such as planning, preparing for, and investing in the future |

(continued)

**Table 2.2**   (continued)

| GLOBE cultural dimensions | Definitions |
| --- | --- |
| Assertiveness | The extent to which members of a society are aggressive, demanding, and confrontational toward each other in their interactions |
| Performance orientation | The extent to which societies reward and encourage individuals for innovation and performance excellence |
| Humane orientation | The extent to which a society encourages its members to be generous, altruistic, and caring, and to show concern for the welfare of others |

## *Edward Hall's High/Low Context Framework[2]*

Another important work in this regard is the conceptualization of culture by Edward Hall. His original fieldwork was with the Navajo, Hopi, and Spanish Americans in the Southwestern United States. Hall's first two books, *The Silent Language* (1959) and *The Hidden Dimension* (1966), discuss the importance of orientation toward time and space in human interactions. In *Beyond Culture (*1976), Hall developed a theoretical model related to context. Culture, he notes, "designates what we pay attention to and what we ignore" (Hall 1976, p. 85). Hall describes context as the connection of social and cultural conditions that surround and influence the life of an individual, an organization, or a community.

Cultures range on a continuum from Low to High context. In Low-Context communications, for example, people pay attention to the explicit words. Other factors such as tone of voice, gesture, social status, history, and social setting are not considered, or, if they are, they are made explicit. Low-Context cultures are more individualized, somewhat fragmented, and there is little involvement with people. In High-Context interactions, people pay attention to the surrounding circumstances or context of an event. It is not necessary to provide explicit information since people already know it through continuous interaction. A High-Context communication requires more time, since trust, friendships and family relationships, personal needs and difficulties, weather, holidays, and other factors must be considered.

In *The Silent Language* (1959), Hall identified ten separate dimensions of human activity, which he has labeled Primary Message Systems: association (relationships), interaction (verbal and nonverbal communication), subsistence (work), bisexuality (gender roles), territoriality (use of space), temporality (time, orientation), learning (what and how knowledge and skills are developed and transmitted), play (importance of and approach to diversion), defense (what, when, and how protection occurs), and exploitation (relationship to others and to environment)

Halverson (1993) argues that the dimensions of association, interaction, territoriality, temporality, and learning are most relevant to interactions in multicultural environments. Based on Hall's work, she points out some concrete ways in which High- and Low- Context cultures vary across these dimensions in Table 2.3.

Halverson has developed a Cultural-Context Inventory to measure and assess one's High-/Low-Context preferences based on these dimensions. The inventory is provided at the end of this chapter.

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[2] I am thankful to Clarie B. Halverson for her contributions to this section.

**Table 2.3** High/low cultural context characteristics (Halverson 1993)

| High context (HC) | Low context (LC) |
| --- | --- |
| **Association** | |
| Relationships depend on trust, build up slowly, and are stable. One distinguishes between people inside and people outside one's circle. | Relationships begin and end quickly. Many people can be inside one's circle; circle's boundary is not clear. |
| How things get done depends on relationships with people and attention to group process. | Things get done by following procedures and paying attention to goal. |
| One's identity is rooted in groups (family, culture, and work). | One's identity is rooted in oneself and one's accomplishments. |
| Social structure and authority are centralized; responsibility is at the top. Person at the top works for good of the group. | Social structure is decentralized; responsibility goes further down (is not concentrated at the top). |
| **Interaction** | |
| High use of nonverbal elements; voice tone, facial expression, gestures, eye movement carry significant parts of the conversation. | Low use of nonverbal elements. Message is carried more by words than by nonverbal means. |
| Verbal message is implicit; context (situation, people, nonverbal elements) is more important than words. | Verbal message is explicit. Context is less important than words. |
| Verbal message is indirect; one talks around the point and embellishes it. | Verbal message is direct; one spells things out exactly. |
| Communication is seen as art form—a way of engaging someone. | Communication is seen as a way of exchanging information, ideas, and opinions. |
| Disagreement is personalized. One is sensitive to conflict expressed in another's nonverbal communication. Conflict either must be solved before work can progress or must be avoided because it is personally threatening. | Disagreement is depersonalized. One withdraws from conflict with another and gets on with the task. Focus is on rational solutions, not personal ones. One can be explicit about another's bothersome behavior. |
| **Territoriality** | |
| Space is communal, people stand close to each other, share the same space. | Space is compartmentalized and privately owned, privacy is important, so people are farther apart. |
| **Temporality** | |
| Everything has its own time. Time is not easily scheduled; needs of people interfere with keeping to a set time. What is important is that activity gets done. | Things are scheduled to be done at particular times, one thing at a time. What is important is that activity is done efficiently. |
| Change is slow. Things are rooted in the past, slow to change, and stable. | Change is fast. One can make change and see immediate results. |
| Time is a process; it belongs to others and to nature. | Time is a commodity to be spent or saved. One's time is one's own. |

**Table 2.3**  (continued)

| High context (HC) | Low context (LC) |
| --- | --- |
| **Learning** | |
| Knowledge is embedded in the situation; things are connected, synthesized, and global. Multiple sources of information are used. Thinking is deductive, proceeds from general to specific. | Reality is fragmented and compartmentalized. One source of information is used to develop knowledge. Thinking is inductive, proceeds from specific to general. Focus is on detail. |
| Learning occurs by first observing others as they model or demonstrate and then practicing. | Learning occurs by following explicit directions and explanations of others. |
| Groups are preferred for learning and problem solving. | An individual orientation is preferred for learning and problem solving. |
| Accuracy is valued. How well something is learned is important. | Speed is valued. How efficiently something is learned is important. |

## *Exercise: Personal Application*

*Reflect upon the cultural values described in the various frameworks and which of these values you relate to conceptually and practically. You may focus on a number of values from the different frameworks or choose a particular framework to guide your reflection.*

*Now think about a multicultural team setting from your past experience. Alternatively, think about an intercultural interaction from your personal experience. Consider the key players involved in this interaction and try remembering their expressed feelings, behaviors, and approaches during that experience.*

*Now carefully and objectively consider your own thinking, feeling, and behaviors during that experience. How do some of the cultural values you reflected upon above explain your and others' behaviors and approaches during these interactions?*

## An Integration of Cultural Frameworks for Multicultural Teams

The frameworks reviewed above offer important approaches to the understanding of culture. Table 2.4 summarizes these frameworks. Taken together, these frameworks, while overlapping in certain dimensions, also diverge in some significant ways. For example, the dimension of Individualism/Collectivism appears quite consistently across the various frameworks, whereas Gender Egalitarianism is fully or partially present in just a few. This naturally presents some difficulties in determining which dimensions should be employed to understand human behavior within the context of teamwork, the focus of this book.

Additionally, there is not an established body of research that might provide clear and meaningful guidance about which of the cultural frameworks and the dimensions

**Table 2.4** Summary of cultural values frameworks

| Kluckhon and Strodtbeck (1961) | Hofstede (1980, 1991, 2001) | Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998) | Schwartz (1994) | House et al. (1999, 2004) | Hall (1990) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Relationships: individualistic versus groups | Individualism/collectivism | Individualism versus communitarism | Embeddedness | Collectivism I and II | Association |
| Relationships: hierarchy | Power distance | Achievement versus ascription | Hierarchy | Power distance | Defense |
| Activity orientation | Uncertainty avoidance | Universalism versus particularism | | Uncertainty avoidance | Bisexuality |
| | Masculinity/femininity | | | Gender egalitarianism | Temporality |
| Time orientation | Long-term orientation | Attitudes towards time | Mastery harmony | Future orientation | Exploitation |
| Relation to nature: subjugation and domination | | Internal versus external control | Egalitarianism | Humane orientation | Play |
| Human nature: good, evil, or mixed | | Neutral versus affective | Affective autonomy | Performance orientation | Learning |
| | | Specific versus diffuse | Intellectual autonomy | Assertiveness | Subsistence |
| | | | | | Interaction and territoriality |

they offer are most relevant for understanding and working effectively in multicultural teams. Therefore, I have developed a summary framework, integrating what seem to me to be the most relevant cultural dimensions, according to three criteria: face validity, robustness and stability based on research evidence, and practical relevance of the cultural dimensions to understanding and working in multicultural teams. This integrated framework contains eight dimensions: Individualism/Collectivism, Universalism/Particularism, Specific/Diffuse, Neutral/Affective, Achievement/Ascription, Temporality, Gender Egalitarianism, and Intellectual Autonomy.

## Individualism–Collectivism

As noted above, in Individualistic cultures, individual needs, preferences, and desires receive more attention than collective needs, whereas, Collectivism focuses on the needs of the collective. This dimension has been conceptualized by most of the frameworks reviewed above and has been demonstrated as one of the most robust dimensions of culture.

## Universalism–Particularism

Interactions, exchanges, and agreements are guided by formal rules and procedures in Universalist societies. There is a lot of emphasis on contracts and laws. In Particularist cultures, emphasis on formal rules and procedures is limited and contextual factors and relationships play an important role in how situations and decisions are approached. In terms of its face validity and practical relevance, this dimension seems quite appropriate for understanding various aspects of team dynamics, especially conflict resolution, problem solving, and decision making.

## Specific–Diffuse

Following Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998) and Hall (1990), this dimension deals with how individuals communicate and interact within societies. As noted above, Specific cultures approach communication directly with attention to clarity of words, frankness, and facts. In Diffuse cultures, indirect communication is acceptable and understood and even preferred in some cases along with attention to contextual factors. This dimension deserves special consideration for our purposes in this book, especially relating to communication, conflict, and leadership dynamics in multicultural teams.

## Neutral–Affective

Building on Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998), Schwartz (1994), and Schwartz and Melech (2000), Neutral cultures emphasize self-control by discouraging visible display of emotions and feelings. On the other hand, emotions are expressed

somewhat openly and comfortably in Affective cultures. Interpersonal exchanges are characterized by passion, use of gestures, and physical contact in the form of touching. This dimension has clear implications for organizational behavior and teamwork, especially in the areas of communication and conflict resolution.

## Achievement–Ascription

To some extent, several of the frameworks reviewed above—including Hofstede (1980, 2001) and House et al. (2004)—deal with the Achievement orientation of societies. As mentioned previously, recognition and position are determined by considering one's competencies and performance in Ascription-oriented cultures. In cultures that value Ascription, people in higher levels of traditional and organizational hierarchy find it easier to access resources; they are able to influence others based on their position and may get respect by virtue of their higher position. This dimension has implications for how multicultural teams may define effectiveness criteria and dynamics around leadership.

## Temporality (Time Orientation)

Orientation toward time has been an important dimension of culture across various frameworks. However, I feel Hall's (1990) work on temporality to be most relevant for our purposes. Working with deadlines and schedules and pace of work are issues central to team task achievement and process, and different culture-based perceptions of time could complicate a team's dynamics.

## Gender Egalitarianism

As discussed above, Gender Egalitarianism is the extent to which societies differentiate between people on the basis of gender when assigning roles, power, status, etc. This is an important dimension of cultural differences that has not been widely employed. Hofstede's work should be credited with generating interest in it. Houseet al. (2004) also employed it in their cultural framework. Gender has increasingly become part of organizational life and the dynamics of multicultural teams, and therefore needs to be taken into consideration in order to manage the internal and external dynamics of teams.

## Intellectual Autonomy

Intellectual Autonomy is the extent to which societies promote and protect freedom and choice in intellectual pursuits. Most teams are formed to deal with complex issues and problems. Innovation, creativity, and intellectual expression contribute

to high-quality problem solving and decision making. The challenge for teams is how to manage differing expectations around intellectual autonomy.

The purpose of the above discussion is to highlight the importance and relevance of some of the key cultural dimensions presented in different cultural frameworks discussed above. It is not my intention to suggest that the cultural dimensions not included in this synthesis are not important. In that sense, this discussion provides an initial platform to link learning and knowledge based on the cultural frameworks to understanding and working with behavioral dynamics in multicultural teams and organizations.

## Relevant Competencies

- Discuss the complexity of defining and conceptualizing the idea of culture
- Apply cultural frameworks to explanations of human behavior in organizational settings
- Use the cultural frameworks and integrated framework to link culture and behavioral dynamics in the context of multicultural teams
- Critically approach the discussions related to culture's impact on teams in subsequent chapters

## Summary

An important objective of this chapter was to familiarize the readers with the notion of culture and highlight some of its complexities. The initial sections of this chapter discussed some key definitions of culture offered over the last five decades and at the same time highlighted a number of challenges and issues in conceptualizing culture. Additionally, the chapter offered a working definition of culture which is sensitive to some of the challenges in understanding and defining cultural complexity and at the same time provides a concrete way of thinking about its key components of shared thinking, feeling, and behaving.

The cultural frameworks discussed in this chapter offer important and practical ways of approaching cultural issues and questions related to understanding behavioral dynamics in multicultural teams and organizational settings. However, it is important to consider the following when working with these frameworks:

- While general patterns and tendencies included in the various frameworks may be attributable to different societies, most cultures include sub-cultures, which may be different in some significant ways from the society within which they exist.
- When working with generalizations about societies and cultural groups, it must be recognized that cultural attributes may not apply to all the individuals for a variety of reasons, including differences in background, experiences, and preferences.

## Case Study: ANZ Foundation

*As you read the case study below, consider the following questions:*

- *Choose one of the cultural frameworks above and apply it to develop some overall understanding of Moroccan, South Korean, and South African cultures. You may find it useful to conduct a basic Internet search to understand the cultural orientation of these countries.*
- *Identify at least three cultural dimensions from the integrated framework above that explain the impact of culture on this team's dynamics.*
- *What challenges and opportunities related to culture are presented in this case?*

*ANZ Foundation was established in South Africa to promote and strengthen the social entrepreneurship field in the African region. An initial endowment established by a group of South African business groups provided the necessary organizational and program-related funding. The main organizational strategy has been to identify and support emerging social entrepreneurs by providing funding and networking opportunities. The organization has selected about 50 fellows so far and plans to select another 200 fellows in the next four years.*

*ANZ recently formulated a team to refine and lead its communication strategy. The team has been charged with developing a stronger communications strategy for the foundation. The aim is to support the ANZ mission impact by making its achievements more visible globally, develop a virtual platform to strongly connect the existing and new fellows, and continuously strengthen engagement with different stakeholders.*

*The core communication team consists of three members. Saba Hassan is a 35-year-old Moroccan female who worked for a UN family organization program based out of South Africa for four years prior to joining ANZ. Saba grew up in Morocco as a Muslim in a well-educated, middle-class environment. She received her advanced training in communications at a French university. Following the completion of her graduate degree she started working in the communications field at a private, for-profit organization within the service sector before she joined the UN project. She joined ANZ as the Director of Communications and will lead the communications strategy development.*

*Lee Yong has a technology background. He became interested in the development sector during a six-month study-abroad assignment in East Africa. Before joining ANZ, he was with a Singapore-based technology consulting firm working on web marketing projects for NGOs and foundations in Asia and Africa. Yong is 32 years old and has been with ANZ for about six months coordinating the development of its new website.*

*Nkosana Sipho, a specialist in communications and marketing, is the third team member. He comes from the Xhosa tribe of South Africa. He attended University of Pretoria, studying economics and management. He has been with ANZ since its inception about three years ago. He is 36 years old and*

*has been working with international development organizations promoting social enterprise development in Sub-Saharan Africa prior to joining ANZ.*

*Over the past four weeks, the team has met about four times and is in the initial stages of articulating the overall strategy direction. Meetings usually start within thirty minutes of the scheduled time. Meetings appear friendly, and team members are respectful of each other. Nkosana enthusiastically participates in the team discussions and is comfortable expressing opinions when important points are to be made. Saba comes to the meetings well-prepared with the agenda and detailed relevant information. She feels that pertinent facts and detailed analysis are crucial to this strategy-development process. Yong is usually quiet during these meetings. He speaks when he is invited to share his thoughts. Most of his contributions are confined to the technical matters. The team is expected to complete most of its work in the next five weeks and make a presentation to the top management team.*

## Cultural-Context Inventory

**Instructions**: For each of the following 20 items, circle 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 to indicate your tendencies and preferences *in a work situation*. Then use the scoring sheet on p. 53 to see how you rank. © Claire B. Halverson (1993)

|  | **Hardly ever** | **Sometimes** | | | **Almost always** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. When communicating, I tend to use a lot of facial expressions, hand gestures, and body movements rather than relying mostly on words. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. I pay more attention to the context of a conversation—who said what and under what circumstances—than I do to the words. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. When communicating, I tend to spell things out quickly and directly, rather than talk around and add to the point. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. In an interpersonal disagreement, I tend to be more emotional than logical and rational. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. I tend to have a small, close circle of friends rather than a large, but less close circle of friends. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. When working with others, I prefer to get the job done first and socialize afterward, rather than socialize first and then tackle the job. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| | Hardly ever | Sometimes | | | Almost always |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7. I would rather work in a group than by myself. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. I believe rewards should be given for individual accomplishments rather than for group accomplishments. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. I describe myself in terms of my accomplishments rather than in terms of my family and relationships. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. I prefer sharing space with others to having my own private space. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. I would rather work for someone who maintains authority and functions for the good of the group than work for someone who allows a lot of autonomy and individual decision-making. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. I believe it is more important to be on time than to let other concerns take priority. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. I prefer working on one thing at a time to working on a variety of things at once. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. I generally set a time schedule and keep to it rather than leaving things unscheduled and go with the flow. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. I find it easier to work with someone who is fast and wants to see immediate results than to work with someone who is slow and wants to consider all the facts. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. In order to learn about something, I tend to consult many sources of information rather than go to the one best authority. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. In figuring out problems, I prefer focusing on the whole situation to focusing on specific parts or taking one step at a time. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. When tackling a new task, I would rather figure it out on my own by experimentation than follow someone else's example or demonstrations. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

(continued)

| | Hardly ever | Sometimes | | | Almost always |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 19. When making decisions, I consider my likes and dislikes, not just the facts. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. I prefer having tasks and procedures explicitly defined to having a general idea of what has to be done. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

**Scoring Instructions**: Transfer the circled numbers to the appropriate blanks provided below. Then add the numbers in each column to obtain your totals for High Context and Low Context.

| High Context (HC) | Low Context (LC) |
|---|---|
| 1._____ | 3._____ |
| 2._____ | 6._____ |
| 4._____ | 8._____ |
| 5._____ | 9._____ |
| 7._____ | 12._____ |
| 10._____ | 13._____ |
| 11._____ | 14._____ |
| 16._____ | 15._____ |
| 17._____ | 18._____ |
| 19._____ | 20._____ |
| Total: _____ | Total: _____ |

Subtract your smaller total from your larger total using one of the equations below. This will give you either a high context or a low context score. If your two totals are equal, your score is zero.

| _____High Context Score | _____Low Context Score |
|---|---|
| _____Low Context Score | _____High Context Score |
| _____High Context Score | _____Low Context Score |

**Interpretation:**

* Scores between 0-3 indicate a relative bi-cultural orientation along the high/low context dimension
* Scores close to 20 indicate a strong preference towards very high or low context.

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