

Time in Cultural Perspective

The Lord is my pace-setter, I shall not rush;
He makes me stop and rest for quiet intervals,
He provides me with images of stillness,
which restore my serenity.
He leads me in the way of efficiency,
through calmness of mind;
and His guidance is peace.

Even though I have a great many things to accomplish each day
I will not fret, for His presence is here.
His timelessness, His all-importance will keep me in balance.
He prepares refreshment and renewal in the midst of activity,
by anointing my mind with His oils of tranquility;
my cup of joyous energy overflows.

Surrely harmony and effectiveness shall be the fruits of my hours
and I shall walk in the pace of my Lord
and dwell in his house for ever

Toki Kiyashina, Psalm 23 for Busy People

1. Social time, as opposed to pure clock time, has been called the "heartbeat of culture" (Levine and Wolff, "Social Time"). More than simply regulating seasons and days, social time is an integral part of every interaction in life, from the micro level (interpersonal synchronicity) to the macro level (institutional time).
2. With few exceptions, however (see the notes on Hall's The Dance of Life below), it has not been studied systematically and integrated into the social sciences concerned with human behavior. Lewis and Weigert propose:, "If social time received the attention it deserved in sociological considerations, no study of human organization and interaction would be considered reasonably complete unless it examined their temporal organization." ("The Structures and Meanings of Time", p. 432)
3. Social time may be noted in three areas (from "The Structures and Meanings of Time"). These will serve as the major headings for the rest of the notes.

Individual or Self Time

1. This is not a linear time, as we can pull memories up in any order we choose (or dream about the future at any point ahead of us).
2. It does not flow homogeneously; the more engrossed we are in an activity, the less time we perceive to have passed ("Time flies when you're having fun").

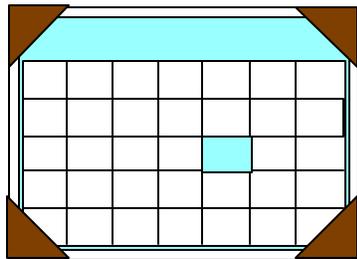
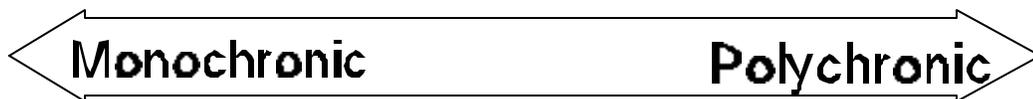
Group or Interaction Time

All social acts are "fit" inside of other social acts (e.g., we greet someone in the hallway while late for class). This is called "time-embeddedness". The tighter the culture perceives the embeddedness

of time, the more important it is to know what is being embedded so as to know its relative priority. The looser the time embeddedness, the less important the surrounding events, and the more central the immediate circumstances. This relates directly to monochronicity and polychronicity as explained below.

In The Dance of Life, Hall proposes eight categories of time as seen in cultural perspective (see diagram below). Two are of particular significance in relation to group time: micro and sync time.

1. Micro time: That system of time that is congruent with and a product of primary level culture (the implicit or hidden level of culture in which the rules are known by all, obeyed by all, but seldom, if ever, stated), it is unique to each culture. Included are the concepts of monochronic and polychronic time.
 - a. Time is one of the fundamental bases on which all cultures rest and around which all activities revolve. Understanding the difference between monochronic time and polychronic time is essential to success in international business. The American working in a foreign country must immediately determine whether the people are monochronic or polychronic [*N.B. "business" may be one orientation, and "home" or "social relations" another*] because this will affect *everything* (Understanding Cultural Differences, p. 179):
 - i. how business is organized,
 - ii. whether schedules are adhered to,
 - iii. how much lead time is needed, and
 - iv. the basic orientation of the culture--past, present, or future.
 - b. What are these orientations? The following diagram and chart may be noted: (information extracted from Hall, "Monochronic and Polychronic Time" [which is a chapter in The Dance of Life] and Hall, Understanding Cultural Differences, pp. 13-16)



Time as a ribbon or road
Attend to one thing

Time almost tangible
Interruptions unwelcome
Scheduling
Clock-Promptness
Privacy valued



Time as a point
Multi-level simultaneous involvement
Time intangible
No problem with interruptions
No scheduling
Relational-promptness
Privacy not valued

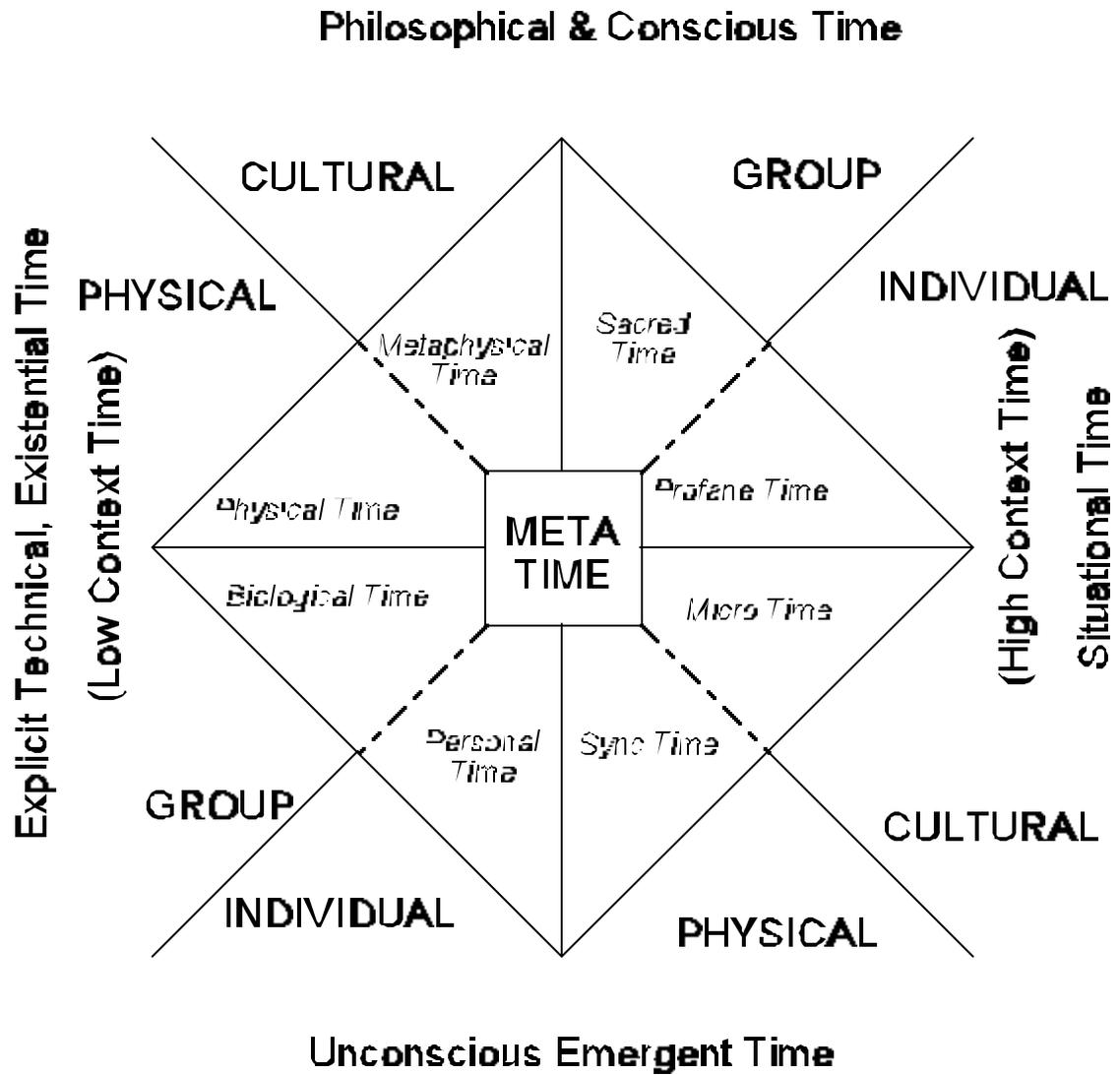
	Monochronic	Polychronic
Examples	United States, England, Switzerland, Germany, etc. (northern Europe)	Latin America, Africa, Asia, Middle East, Southern Europe
Definition	Paying attention to and doing only one thing at a time.	Being involved in many things at once. Stresses involvement of people and completion of transactions rather than adherence to preset schedules.
Experience of time	In a linear way--like a road extending toward the future. It is divided into segments; it is scheduled and compartmentalized, which makes it possible for a person to concentrate on one thing at a time.	Time is seen more as a point than a road--but that particular point is often sacred. Commitments are an objective to be achieved, if possible.
Appointments and schedules	Takes high priority; may even be viewed as sacred and unalterable. Can apply to business, social life--even sexual life.	Time commitments are an objective to be achieved, if possible.
View of time	It is almost tangible--it can be spent, saved, wasted, lost, made up, crawling, running out, and even killed!	Not as tangible. While important, it must be placed in the context of relationships, which take a higher priority.
Priorities	Commitment is to the job. Time serves as a classification system for ordering life and setting priorities in relation to the job ("I don't have time to see her.") The important things are scheduled in, the unimportant are scheduled out.	Commitment is to relationships, which are more important than time--they set the agenda, not the clock.
Interruptions	Not liked--they break the sealing off that occurs in a scheduled environment. We are concerned that we not disturb others, and follow rules of privacy and consideration built on this presupposition.	Accepted; not a problem; maintaining relations demands flexibility with interruptions. There is more concern with those who are closely related (family, friends, close business associates) than with privacy.
Ongoing contact	Fit into schedules according to priorities.	A compulsion to keep in touch because of immersion in relationships. Not scheduled, but very important.
Plans	Plans are seriously developed and are adhered to almost religiously	Plans are flexible and may be changed quickly
Bureaucracies	Can grow and proliferate, though consolidation into larger units maintains the growth possibilities. Tends to be blind to the humanity of its members. Theoretically will treat all people the same.	Kept small (there are only so many relationships which can be maintained at the same time), not really set up to handle the problems of outsiders. You must have an "insider" to make things happen. Dependent on gifted individuals at the top who ensure the organization functions. Weakness is overdependence on leaders to handle anything out of the ordinary and to keep on top of the whole framework.
Administration and control of people	Compartmentalized; their activities are scheduled, and the analysis of the activities of the job is left to the individual performing them.	More holistic; analysis of job role within the total system is the foundation. Leaders take each subordinate's job and identify the activities that go with it. These are labelled with elaborate charts to ensure they are being done--though "scheduling" how and when they will get done is left completely to the subordinate.
Private property	Show great respect for private property; seldom borrow or lend.	Borrow and lend things often and easily.
Privacy	Highly valued; not violated.	Not valued--people do not want to be alone, as they are missing the relationships by which they identify themselves.
Promptness	Defined by the clock.	Defined by the relationship.
Relationship longevity	Accustomed to short-term relationships (note importance of this for those in sales)	Have strong tendency to build life time relationships (note importance of this for those in sales)
Office space	Privacy is highly valued; soundproofing is also important. Appointments are private and not amenable to interruptions.	Meetings/appointments can take place in public settings; private offices with closed doors are not the ideal, as it removes those in the room from the total office context (and the flow of information that takes place in public areas).

2. **Sync time:** The original term came from the movie industry, which had to synchronize the sound tracks with the pictures. Synchronization of the daily transactions of life, another culture dependent form of time. This included synchronizing our own internal communication patterns (usually out of conscious awareness; includes things from gestures to eye blinking) as well as synchronizing our communication with others (hesitations, who speaks when, etc.). Hall notes:

It can now be said with assurance that individuals are dominated in their behavior by complex hierarchies of interlocking rhythms. Furthermore, these same interlocking rhythms are comparable to fundamental themes in a symphonic score, a keystone in the interpersonal processes between mates, co-workers, and organizations of all types on the interpersonal level within as well as across cultural boundaries. (The Dance of Life, 153)

Culture or Institutional Time

1. As mentioned above, Edward Hall proposes eight major categories of time which he maps out at follows::



2. Every culture has to face the fact that the future is uncertain--what types of strategies are there to deal with this fact? How well does our culture tolerate what is unpredictable? Uncertainty is subjective--it is rooted in feelings, and the roots of a culture's approach to uncertainty is not necessarily rooted in the rational realm.
 - a. In Hofstede's work, the uncertainty avoidance index was related to the responses on three questions (Cultures and Organizations, 111-2):
 - i. Amount of perceived job stress (on a scale of 1 to 5)

- ii. Agreement with the statement: "Company rules should not be broken--even when the employee thinks it is in the company`s best interest."
- iii. The percentage of employees saying they would be with the company for their career.

This is intended to be seen as a culture-wide phenomenon. In other words, as a whole people in the same society would tend to have a certain trend, though this does not necessarily mean that any particular individual in that culture will show the same attitude.

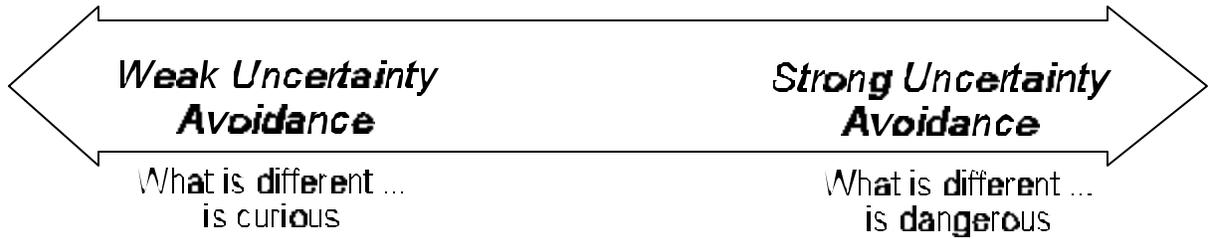
- b. Hofstede proposes three domains seen in cultures that help alleviate our anxieties (Cultures and Organizations, 110):

- i. **Technology:** helps deal with uncertainties in our physical environment
- ii. **Law:** helps deal with uncertainties in our relationships with other people
- iii. **Religion:** helps deal with uncertainties over which we have no control

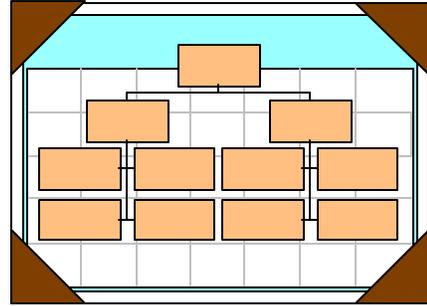
- c. The uncertainty avoidance distance index for 50 countries and 3 regions is as follows (higher scores indicate stronger uncertainty avoidance):

Rank	Country/Region	Score	Rank	Country/Region	Score	Rank	Country/Region	Score
1	Greece	112	19	Israel	81	37	Australia	51
2	Portugal	104	20	Colombia	80	38	Norway	50
3	Guatemala	101	21/22	Venezuela	76	39/40	South Africa	49
4	Uruguay	100	21/22	Brazil	76	39/40	New Zealand	49
5/6	Belgium	94	23	Italy	75	41/42	Indonesia	48
5/6	Salvador	94	24/25	Pakistan	70	41/42	Canada	48
7	Japan	92	24/25	Austria	70	43	USA	46
8	Yugoslavia	88	26	Taiwan	69	44	Philippines	44
9	Peru	87	27	Arab countries	68	45	India	40
10/15	France	86	28	Ecuador	67	46	Malaysia	36
10/15	Chile	86	29	Germany FR	65	47/48	Great Britian	35
10/15	Spain	86	30	Thailand	64	47/48	Ireland	35
10/15	Costa Rica	86	31/32	Iran	59	49/50	Hong Kong	29
10/15	Panama	86	31/32	Finland	59	49/50	Sweden	29
10/15	Argentina	86	33	Switzerland	58	51	Denmark	23
16/17	Turkey	85	34	West Africa	54	52	Jamaica	13
16/17	South Korea	85	35	Netherlands	53	53	Singapore	8
18	Mexico	82	36	East Africa	52			

- d. The following diagram and chart summarize the concept that the spectrum involved:



Looser structure
 Less emotions shown
 Easy-going
 Can say, "I don't know"
 Innovative
 Rules inhibiting



Tighter structure
 Emotional expression allowed
 Aggressiveness
 Desire for certainty rules
 Urge to be busy
 Punctual and precise

Basic Descriptions
 (see *Cultures and Organizations*, 125)

Weak Uncertainty Avoidance (Less Anxiety) <i>What is Different is Curious</i>	Strong Uncertainty Avoidance (More Anxiety) <i>What is Different is Dangerous</i>
<p style="text-align: center;">General</p> <p>Less expressive. This results in more deaths from coronary heart disease because those who need emotional expression are repressed and forced to deal with stress internally. People give the impression of being quiet, easy-going, indolent, controlled, and lazy. Feel comfortable with familiar and unfamiliar risks.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">General</p> <p>Tend to be more expressive--people talk more with their hands, it is socially acceptable to show emotions, pound the table, raise your voice. People come across as busy, fidgety, emotional, aggressive, and active; high levels of anxiety and aggressiveness (e.g., higher speed limits and faster driving) . On average people feel less well (because of more anxiety). Feel comfortable with familiar risks to help them avoid uncertainty, like "starting a fight with a potential opponent rather than sitting back and waiting." (<i>Cultures and Organizations</i>, 116)</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">Weak Uncertainty Avoidance (Less Anxiety) <i>What is Different is Curious</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Strong Uncertainty Avoidance (More Anxiety) <i>What is Different is Dangerous</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Family</p> <p>Lenient rules for children as to what is "dirty" and "taboo"</p> <p style="text-align: center;">School</p> <p>There is a tolerance for deviation from expected behaviors--originality is valued and rewarded. Students do not need to agree with the teachers. Well-argued disagreement will be rewarded. The teacher has the freedom to say, "I don't know." Open-ended and loosely structured assignments are acceptable. Good class discussion valued.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Workplace</p> <p>People are quite able to work hard when needed, but they are not driven by an inner urge towards constant activity. There seems to be an emotional horror of formal rules--there should not be any more than necessary. Punctuality and precision will need to be learned. Greater tendency to develop basic innovations--though they might not be as adept at developing them to full-scale implementation.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Family</p> <p>Tight rules for children as to what is "dirty" and "taboo"</p> <p style="text-align: center;">School</p> <p>A craving for certainty and security--the way of reaching the right answer is just as important as having the right answer. Students will generally agree with the teachers. Teachers are to have all the answers. Assignments that are well-structured with precise instructions will be better received. Good lecture style valued.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Workplace</p> <p>A strong inner urge to always be busy, which is usually connected to working hard. There is an emotional need for formal structure resulting in extensive rules, regulations, and organizational frameworks. Punctuality and precision will tend to come "naturally" Less tendency to develop basic innovations--they tend to be adept at developing them to full-scale implementation.</p>

e. What do the Scriptures teach about uncertainty avoidance? The following passages may be noted:

Weak Uncertainty Avoidance

Matthew 6:19-20: "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.

Matthew 6:25-34: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? 26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? 27 Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? 28 "And why do you worry about

Strong Uncertainty Avoidance:

Galatians 1:8-9: But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! 9 As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!

2 Timothy 2:7-9: Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this. 8. Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my

clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. 29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

John 8:36: So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

1 Corinthians 9:19-21: Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. 20 To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. 21 To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law.

Galatians 5:1: It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Galatians 5:13: You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.

Philippians 4:6-7: Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:11-12: I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.

Colossians 2:20-23: Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: 21 "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!"? 22 These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. 23 Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

1 Peter 2:16: Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God.

gospel, 9 for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's word is not chained.

2 Timothy 2:11-15: Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; 12 if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us; 13 if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself. 14. Keep reminding them of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen. 15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

2 Timothy 3:14-17: But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, 15 and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

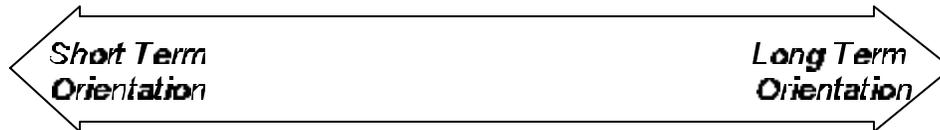
2 Timothy 4:1-3: In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: 2 Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage-- with great patience and careful instruction. 3 For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.

3. Short term or long term orientation: Research from a value survey originally written by Chinese researchers in Chinese and adapted for other language groups shows correlations to three of Hofstede's dimensions. It also adds one more, called "Confucian Work Dynamism" ("Chinese Values and the Search for Culture-Free Dimensions of Culture" and Cultures and Organizations, 162-66). The statistical correlations (which should not be thought of as identical) may be summarized:

Hofstede`s Values		Chinese Value Survey	
Dealing with juniors and seniors . . .			
Power Distance	Large PD	Moderation, keeping oneself disinterested and pure, having few desires	Moral Discipline
	Small PD	Adaptability and prudence	
Dealing with groups . . .			
Individualism-Collectivism	Individualism	Tolerance of others, harmony with others, solidarity with others, non-competitiveness, trustworthiness, contentedness, being conservative, a close, intimate friend	Integration
	Collectivism	Filial piety (obedience to parents, respect for parents, honoring of ancestors, financial support of parents), patriotism, and chastity in women	
Dealing with male and female . . .			
Masculinity-Femininity	Masculinity	Kindness, patience, courtesy (these are not considered masculine characteristics in Hofstede`s research!)	Human heartedness
	Femininity	Sense of righteousness, and patriotism	
Dealing with virtue or truth . . .			
Uncertainty Avoidance	Strong UA	(No correlation)	
	Weak UA		
(No correlation)		<i>Long-Term Orientation:</i> Ordering relationships by status and observing that order, thrift, persistence, having a sense of shame <i>Short-Term Orientation:</i> Reciprocation of greetings, favors, gifts; personal steadiness and stability; protecting your face; and respect for tradition	Confucian work dynamism

- a. The long-term orientation (or Confucian work dynamic) index for 23 countries. The top five countries in the original survey [which excluded China] had a strong correlation between CWD index and economic growth from 1965-1987, suggesting the possibility of a link between the values expressed in long-term orientation and a country`s economic growth.

Rank	Country/Region	Score	Rank	Country/Region	Score	Rank	Country/Region	Score
1	China	118	10	Netherlands	44	19	Zimbabwe	25
2	Hong Kong	96	11	Bangladesh	40	20	Canada	23
3	Taiwan	87	12	Sweden	33	21	Philippines	19
4	Japan	80	13	Poland	32	22	Nigeria	10
5	South Korea	75	14	Germany FR	31	23	Pakistan	0
6	Brazil	65	15	Australia	31			
7	India	61	16	New Zealand	30			
8	Thailand	56	17	USA	29			
9	Singapore	48	18	Great Britain	25			



Personal steadiness and stability
Protecting your 'face'
Respect for tradition
Reciprocation of greetings, favors and gifts



Persistence (perseverance)
Ordering relationships by status
Observing this status order
Thrift
Sense of shame

b. Hofstede writes (Cultures and Organizations, 168-9):

The label `Confucian` for the dimension could be seen as somewhat misleading. As we saw, *both* opposing poles of the dimension contain Confucian values. Some non-Confucian countries like Brazil and India score also fairly high on the index (Brazil has a sizeable Japanese minority, though). To the Western observer, the East Asian countries seem to be more oriented towards traditions and face than the West, but here the reader should be reminded that the index measures the *relative* value given to one side over the other. If the students in the East value tradition, they value thrift even more. . . .

In spite of this disclaimer, the values at the LTO pole are very Confucian *and* support entrepreneurial activity. *Persistence* (perseverance), tenacity in the pursuit of whatever goals, is an essential asset for a beginning entrepreneur. *Ordering relationships by status and observing this order* reflects the Confucian stress on unequal relationship pairs, the *wu lun*. A sense of a harmonious and stable hierarchy and complementarity of roles undoubtedly makes the entrepreneurial role easier to play. *Thrift* leads to savings and the availability of capital for reinvestment by oneself or one's relatives. The value of *having a sense of shame* supports interrelatedness through sensitivity to social contacts and a stress on keeping one's commitments.

At the short-term orientation pole, *personal steadiness and stability*, if overstressed, discourage the initiative, risk seeking, and changeability required of entrepreneurs in quickly changing markets. *Protecting one's face* if exaggerated would detract from pursuing the business at hand. Even if there is, in fact, a lot of face-saving going on in East Asia, the scores show that at the conscious level, the student respondents wanted to de-emphasize it. Too much *respect for tradition* impedes innovation. . . . Finally, *reciprocation of greetings, favors, and gifts* is a social ritual more concerned with good manners than performance. Again, although definitely still very present in the East Asian countries, it seems to be consciously de-emphasized.