

# The history of the uncertainty avoidance sociology essay



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In many international countries such as Britain, intercultural communication takes place. This is all about 'the interpersonal interaction between members of different groups, which differ from each other in respect of the knowledge shared by their members and in respect of their linguistic forms of symbolic behaviour'(Karlfried Knapp 1978). It can be analysed to prove that there are many different ways in which the world works, in order to show how intercultural communication happens in day-to-day life. Although this report is going to be evaluating four of them which are, high context/low context, individualism/collectivism, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity/femininity.

High context/low context is a type of cultural coordination that can be understood in various ways. This image shows the majority of the countries on a scale ranging from high to low context. Whatever the situation may be at hand, high context cultures depends on their speech and behaviour. This is explained as a theory from Hofstede (1980) stating that, high context conversations consist of the sender pre-planning what they have to say, in order for the receiver to understand. There is evidence in China of this, because before they meet up, all of their discussions take place beforehand. Once they have met, which is officially known as a 'ceremony'; they would make whatever they spoke about beforehand approved. On the other hand, in low context conversations, the sender may say there dialogue in short-form, although the receiver would still understand. In contrast to China, America and Germany don't have a discussion beforehand, but inform the participants in the meeting. Generally in high context cultures, information is carried out through body language. From this, people are likely to understand the discussion without much explanation. In some cultures,

looking at people in the eye is normally used for people to have a straight forward dialogue. A good example of a high-context experience would be the Japanese tea ceremony. As shown in this image (Copyright © 1990 by Japan National Tourist Organisation), this is a traditional cultural activity; therefore everybody who takes part knows what to do. Also the shared experience shows that every citizen would know what is included i. e. 'the tea house, the flower arrangement, the calligraphy scroll, and the ceramics.' (F. E. Jandt, 2001). context. gif (550Ã-185)[http://www. bookmice. net/darkchilde/japan/japan/tea. jpg](http://www.bookmice.net/darkchilde/japan/japan/tea.jpg)

Also, individuals in the Arab culture feel that if they use too little eye-contact in their conversations, they may find it impolite. Conversely in the USA, the best way to bond with people is to have eye-contact with them. Even in the English culture, a certain amount of eye contact is essential, but too much makes people uncomfortable.

Problems often occur when workers from high and low context cultures, have a work-related conversation with each other. This may happen as citizens from high-context cultures familiarise themselves to their families, friends and close colleagues. In this group, everyone knows what is going on, as they regularly communicate and exchange information about everything. On the other hand, in low-context cultures the people do not get along with others in their daily life. So therefore they do not get a chance, to go out and meet new people like citizens from high-context cultures. Also, they are never able to create a close relationship with the people they meet, as their conversations happen in a long-winded way. In professional situations they

only talk about the necessary information that is needed in order to complete the job; this doesn't happen constantly.

When dealing with people from a high or low-context culture, each person has to notice the origin culture of the speaker. This is to be able to avoid any confusion, and it allows everybody to have longer or future conversations.

## **Individualism/Collectivism**

Individualism/Collectivism is the concept of how people make important and useful decisions. A decision can be made in two ways, either as a group (collectivism) or as an individual (individualism). The main difference between the two would be that, 'in an individualistic cultures, " people are supposed to look after themselves and their immediate family only," while in collectivistic cultures, " people belong to in groups or collectivities which are supposed to look after them in exchange for loyalty" (Hofstede & Bond, 1984, p. 419). Although nowadays, Masakazu (1994) defines modern individualism as " a view of humanities that justifies inner beliefs and unilateral self-assertion, as well as competition based on these".

An example of an individualistic culture would be people in the USA; they are likely to only take care of themselves and their direct family. Normally to be able to create a close relationship, you would like to know more about the person's personal life i. e.: their occupation, their achievements in life, where they live etc. Although, this doesn't occur in individualist cultures, as surveys show that the most unique and everlasting characteristics of the United States character are independence and individuality. The country also allows citizens in the country to have the freedom to be an individual, which is what

their passion is. In theory Patterson (1991) has believed that this passion is related to the country's history of slavery.

In contrast, collectivistic cultures mainly look after other people and understand their characteristics (Gudykunst, Gao, Nishida, et al., 1992). They also try to avoid situations where they hurt people, either physically or mentally (Kim, 1994). This may be because in collectivist cultures, they expect people to fit into groups. <http://www.watchmesavetheworld.com/wp-content/themes/Nomad/timthumb.php?src=http://www.watchmesavetheworld.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/P1040042-1024x768.jpg&h=300&w=720&zc=1>

Let's start by unpacking the concept of "collectivism" and its ideological counterpoint "individualism." In simplest terms collectivist societies place the primacy of the group over the primacy of the individual, vice-versa for individualist societies. Archetypal examples of collectivist societies include communist China and Russia, and Scandinavian countries with strong social services programs. Examples of archetypal individualist societies include the United States, Japan, and Germany. Of course, this is all a massive oversimplification of a complex concept. In reality, levels of collectivism break down over political, social, educational, and even technological dimensions. A country might be highly collectivist in one dimension, and not at all in another, or it might comprise various sub-cultures that are far more or less collectivist than the country taken as a whole. Notwithstanding the breadth and depth of this subject, I want to focus on a few particular facets of Moroccan culture that most powerfully indicate the presence of a collectivist mentality: meal consumption, the educational system, and received wisdom. <https://assignbuster.com/the-history-of-the-uncertainty-avoidance-sociology-essay/>

Examples of collectivism in social interactions abound, but one of the most obvious is in food preparation and consumption. With very few exceptions, meals are eaten out of a large common dish, using bread as utensils.

Vegetables and sauce are eaten first, and meat is eaten last, often divided up by the person who cooked the meal to ensure an equitable share for each participant. This is an easy contrast to western eating, where individual portions, utensils, and ever increasingly, individual meals are the norm.

Moroccan families will almost always wait for all members of the family to arrive before eating. If you are anywhere in the vicinity of a meal as it starts, you will inevitably be invited to eat. Every invitation that you get to join a person or a family for a meal is absolutely sincere, and they will expect you to come. These examples point to the prevalence of collectivism on a the level of an individual or a family, but collectivism in Morocco is equally prevalent in the aggregate, and sometimes with less copacetic results.

An example of this culture would be in Japan. In this society people are dependent on one another, which is the main indication that shows that Japan is a collectivistic culture. Groups are formed in which citizens will hold onto all the way through their lives. It would also be their back-up and protection for whenever they are in need for unquestioning dependability. This brings a joy to the group, as well as the need to connect with others. This has a great importance as the difference can be defined with what is said in public and the truth. - wrong

Nevertheless, people in individualistic cultures apply the same standards to everything whilst relating to everything and everybody. This is compared to collectivistic culture citizens, who treat member of their in and out groups  
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with different value standards. Individualistic culture members are more worried with the simplicity of their conversations (Kim, 1994) and view this as an important issue for effective communication (Kim & Wilson, 1994) compared to collectivistic cultures. Another comparison between both types of cultures, is that individualistic people notice direct requests as their most effective strategy in order to complete their goals, while members of collective cultures are the opposite (Kim & Wilson, 1994). In completion, it can be understood that the stress in individualistic societies is based on the individual's personal goals and achievements, whereas the complete opposite is the where the stress is based on belonging to groups in collectivistic cultures.

## **Uncertainty avoidance**

Uncertainty avoidance looks at a degree to which cultures feel defenceless due to doubtful situations, also the point to which they try to avoid these. It shows that to a certain point a culture pushes their members out of their comfort zone, to be able to see how they deal in situations which are unknown, surprising and different from usual. Uncertainty avoidance can either be high or low. The main difference is that, citizens normally show their emotions more in high compared to low uncertainty avoidance cultures. This may be because in low uncertainty avoidance cultures, people have lower stress levels as well as they don't mind either disagreeing or taking risks compared to people in high uncertainty avoidance cultures.

Uncertainty avoiding cultures have a chance of reducing the chance of any risky situations happening. This is by having strict laws and rules, which have safety and secure measures. An example of high-uncertainty avoidance <https://assignbuster.com/the-history-of-the-uncertainty-avoidance-sociology-essay/>

country would be France. This is because their organisations approve having strong establishments and in general discourage risk taking activities taking place. On the other hand, Britain and Norway are countries which have low-uncertainty avoidance. They will follow a more flexible structure and encourage people to have diverse views.

In the 'Uncertainty avoidance by Country' graph (Appendix 1), it shows 12 countries and how much uncertainty avoidance there is in each country. It can be analysed, to be able work out that U. S. A is known to be highly debateable so that is why they have a low rank of 46 on uncertainty avoidance. Even though India is less avoidant of uncertainty compared to U. S. A, they still have scored a reasonably high score of 52. Interestingly, of the G-8 countries, only Canada (48) and the U. K. (35) had relatively low scores like the U. S. A. On the other hand, Russia (95), Japan (92), and France (86) were out of the range, when comparing to other countries as they have scored extremely high for uncertainty avoidance.

## **Masculinity/femininity**

In all of the countries around the world, everybody has an opinion about gender inequality. Always questioning themselves as to why there may be more masculine or feminine. Therefore it can always be identified, that in every culture and society around the world there is a gender disproportion. In general, it is normally specified that some responsibilities or jobs are assigned to women. Even in religious ways, allocation of different social responsibilities goes to men and women. Not just in family households, the whole social system becomes a characteristic, as it leads to unequal

distribution of control, respect and properties. It shows that in principals, <https://assignbuster.com/the-history-of-the-uncertainty-avoidance-sociology-essay/>

everybody cares about this situation compared to showing their concern for individuals and their quality of life. In other words, " Masculinity is the opposite of femininity; together, they form one of the dimensions of national cultures. Masculinity stands for a society which social gender roles are clearly distinct: men are supposed to be more modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life." (Source: Hofstede, page 262).

A main example would be India and Malaysia. Between these two countries, India has a high male portion of citizens in their society, compared to Malaysia who has a high female portion. In these cultures, one gender is normally controlled by the other. There is known to be six types of gender inequality which are; mortality, natality, basic facilities, ownership, household and special opportunity.

One of the main types of gender inequality is to do with basic facilities. In India, boys have a greater opportunity of having an education compared to girls. Girls are also unable to showcase their talent and also take part in social events that take place within the community. Not just in these sorts of situations, parents also favour their sons to enter higher education. In their opinion, this may be because they believe their sons need to earn a good education to be able to take care of their future families. Also for future families, ladies are expected to be a good housewife, but this doesn't need a lot of knowledge, as they are able to study this information from their mother. Even if women try to finish their studies, they are only able to continue on, with the condition that they must come from a rich family.

Alternatively, in Malaysia their cultures are more caring. As in their education system, women and men are allowed to have an education, yet anybody can <https://assignbuster.com/the-history-of-the-uncertainty-avoidance-sociology-essay/>

be defeated in the act. This shows that based on Malaysian culture, gender unfairness does not exist. <http://photos1.blogger.com/blogger/3815/3529/320/basic%20facilities.0.jpg>

Another type of gender inequality is to do with household work. As in India, it is mainly known for men to go to work and earn a living, and then for women to stay at home looking after their children and do the housework. This is a disadvantage, as women will never get the chance to be able to experience the outside world. This links from the fact that, they are unable to have an education as well. Then again in femininity countries such as Malaysia, women have the freedom to be able to choose the jobs that they favour.

Also, they are capable to gain more experience, by furthering their studies whilst overseas. Elsewhere, when it comes to housework, men also share the load. This helps the family a lot, as both parents are able to work and help with the financial matters. <http://photos1.blogger.com/blogger/3815/3529/320/Household%20inequality.0.jpg>

## **Conclusion**

Overall, it is essential to understand that there are many differences in people who come from other cultures. The main difference is that in all the countries around the world, there may be an issue with cultural coordination, how people make important and useful decisions in their life, how people may feel doubtful in various situations and the way gender inequality occurs.

It can be understood that a role of individualism-collectivism is low-and high-context communication. (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988). Also when

looking at gender inequality, pain is more familiar for people in masculine cultures compared to feminine cultures (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988).

Therefore, everybody must be careful whilst having a gathering with people. This is because by not knowing what culture they come from, problems may occur easily due to the way the person communicates, their attitude towards conflict, the way they make decisions and the how they approach to knowing about life.

## **Appendices**

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