

The concept of  
hofstede cultural  
dimensions theory in  
the white tiger, a  
novel by...



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The Hofstede dimensions which differ the most between the United States and India are power distance, individualism, long-term orientation, and indulgence. Power distance is the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally. The United States scored a 40 in the power distance dimension, while India scored a 70. A score of 70 indicates an appreciation for hierarchy, which is exemplified in Indian society. India's society is a hierarchical caste system which designates a specific niche in society which you are born into. For a society such as this to function, an ability to 'accept that power is distributed unequally' must exist, or individuals would not remain trapped in their individual caste. Further, as the power dimension explains, they have acceptance of unequal rights between the power-privileged and those who are lower in society. Indian society has a top-down structure where an employee always has a supervisor, and is always being monitored. In *The White Tiger* by Aravind Adiga, the narrator, Balram, is applying for a job as a driver for a man named Mr. Ashok. He asks Balram, "What's your last name again? 'Halwai' 'Halwai...what caste is that, top or bottom?'" (Adiga 53). This again shows the unequal distribution of power in India, causing their high score in the power distance dimension.

Individualism is referred to as the degree of interdependence a society maintains among its members. The United States scores a 91 in this dimension, while India only scores a 48. India has a lack of Individualism, which is replaced by collectivism. This mindset makes individuals in India more likely to share ideas or be open to working in groups. In *The White Tiger*, Balram explains to us how he got his name. He at first took the name "

Munna”, or boy, since everyone was too busy to name him. At last he was named by his first teacher, saying “Munna? That’s not a real name...It’ll be Balram” (Adiga 10). This clearly shows the lack of individualism in India, as something so seemingly important as a name could go unattended for so long. Collectivism overpowers individualism in India, resulting in their lower-than-average score in the individualism dimension of 48.

The long-term orientation dimension is another that India scores higher on, 51, than the United States, 26. This dimension describes how every society has to maintain some links with its own past while dealing with the challenges of the present and future. India’s high score suggests a lack of punctuality when working with individuals, as well as their tolerance for other religious views. Further, these societies tend to react well to changing on the go, and they do not need an exact plan. When working in Indian society, one might note if deadlines are strict or not, or be open to changing plans frequently when new ideas come to light.

The indulgence dimension refers to the extent to which people try to control their desires and impulses. India’s low score of 26 in this dimension, suggests that they have restraint as a society. Actions are restrained by social norms, especially compared to Americans. The United States scored a 68 in this dimension, suggesting we have a tendency for indulgence.

Of Hofstede’s dimensions, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, and long term orientation would be the most difficult for me to deal with, when adjusting to Indian society. The masculinity and long-term orientation dimensions specifically would be difficult to deal with when working with

others. The dimension of masculinity is defined as the desire to be the best, opposed to liking what you do. I prefer to have a competitive working environment. I find that this helps to motivate me and increase my performance. If I were to be working inside the Indian culture, I would struggle to work outside of my preferred environment, a competitive one. While I think it is a good thing to like what you do, I am more motivated by others in a competitive environment. Long term orientation is how every society has to maintain some links with its own past while dealing with the challenges of the present and future. One trait of high scorers in long term orientation is lack of punctuality. On the other hand, I prefer set deadlines, and detailed instructions of what is expected of me. It might be difficult for me to adjust to a work environment in which these things were not important. In preparation, I could try to be more lenient with my deadlines and take on more flexible planning strategies.

The individualism and uncertainty avoidance dimensions would further cause conflict in my integration into Indian work culture. Individualism is defined as the degree of interdependence a society maintains among its members. In my ideal work environment, I would have some degree of independence, being able to work at my own pace and meet deadlines on my own. In a culture which is more collective than individualist, work is often collaborated on and supervision is close, which may be difficult to work with. Before moving into the Indian culture, I could attend classes in groups to improve my socialization with others in the workplace and my ability to work as a team. The uncertainty avoidance dimension is the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations

and have created beliefs and institutions that try to avoid these. India's score, a 40, indicates that most of society is willing to make changes to plans on the fly, and differ from plans. It also indicates a lack of emphasis on perfection, with a willingness to accept imperfections. I would need to adjust to work with this society, as I am more of a perfectionist, and plan to stick to a designated plan. To work on this, I could attend improvisation classes in preparation to enhance my ability to think quickly and react accordingly.