

# [Cultural differences analysis](https://assignbuster.com/cultural-differences-analysis/)

Differences between cultures are wide-ranging and there are also many differences among cultures that are geographically close. The noticeable differences are from the uniqueness of specific cultures or of an individual influenced from belonging to his or her family culture. Families have tremendously strong connections for an individual to remain within and follow the customs of the culture he or she has been raised. Cultural Identity and Bias Families have a strong influence, no matter which culture, on the individuals belonging to the immediate family unit including grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins.

In the Greek culture, life is centered on the family unit. The father is the head of the house and has final word of any decisions made. Although it has been said that “ the man is the head but the woman is the neck and she can turn the head any way she wants” (My Big Fat Greek Wedding, 2002). Marrying a Greek man, having Greek children, and living a Greek life is what is expected of young Greek women. The thought of marrying a non-Greek is unfathomable and not easily accepted within the structure of most Greek families.

The father would have to decide on accepting this change and the young woman would have a difficult time being accepted within her own family for making this sort of decision. Most Greek families work for the family businesses. Hiring outside of the family is unacceptable as the Greek family is enormous and consists of enough members to fill any vacant position. As the father is the hierarchy, decisions are made by him and when the head of the house makes a decision it is final. Change is very hard to accept, which is why going outside of the Greek culture is a hard change to make.

Religion and learning the cultural ways from the old world is imperative to the Greek family members, carrying on tradition is highly important and expected from all members. The tradition of asking for the father’s permission to date his daughter or marry his daughter is an important tradition to follow and a mistake to forget. An old world view of educating women as a mistake is difficult to overcome and another change that the younger Greek generation fights regularly for family acceptance. The Greek family has many traditions passed down to each generation.

An example of this is marrying in a Greek Orthodox church. For a non-Greek to marry an individual from an orthodox family, he or she must be baptized in the Greek faith in the Orthodox church. Once this baptism has taken place, the individual can then marry his or her fiance as well as becoming acceptable as a Greek person within the family. The family is very protective of each other and the family is together in full force for every occasion. Birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, births, engagements, breakfast, lunch, dinner, etc. , the family will gather with an enormous amount of food to celebrate any given reason.

For an emerging young woman to embrace her culture yet find herself a path of her own, she needs to follow the advice of “ don’t let your past dictate who you are, let it be part of who you become” (My Big Fat Greek Wedding, 2002). For a young woman to marry outside of her culture, take the necessary steps for her boyfriend to be accepted by her father and the entire family, and still hold on to her culture she must be strong in her families’ beliefs and values to bridge the gap of differences to build a strong relationship for her new husband and children to come.

This young woman must always remember that in such a strong and tightly-knit family unit that her family is there for her no matter where she is or what she is doing. Cultural Patterns Cultural patterns help identify a group of associated cultural traits that have some connection to each other (Lustig & Koester, 2006, p. 86). When two cultures come together for the sake of friendship, business relations, or marriage, learning these patterns is essential for communication as well as maintaining strong relationships. The Greek culture is very different from American culture.

Although both cultures appear to be direct and open, the Greek culture is more so within their own culture than with those outside their culture. Americans are very confrontational and react verbally and nonverbally to another individual’s actions and behaviors. The Greek culture is centered on family and protecting the family members can provoke a confrontational reaction either verbally or nonverbally. All cultures regard art in different manners. The manner that an individual or group regards art is informative of most cultures.

American art is as diverse as the cultures within the country, whereas Greeks are proud of their culture and display this with art as statues of Athena or the Parthenon that are very important pieces of the Greek culture. As in the My Big Fat Greek Wedding, statues were displayed in the front lawn and the Greek flag was represented on the garage door. Religion is an important part of the Greek culture as well. Greek families want their children to marry only another Greek, to have Greek babies, and to live everything Greek.

In My Big Fat Greek Wedding, Ian was not Greek and in order for the family to accept him in the slightest manner he had to be baptized in a Greek Orthodox church. American culture is not so strict in this manner, as Americans are not as particular about religion unless raised in a strict religious environment. Intercultural Communication Verbal and nonverbal intercultural communication was at times, very difficult in My Big Fat Greek Wedding. In the beginning of the relationship between Ian and Toula, she chose to keep her new romance a secret from her family.

She told her family she was in a pottery class, when, in fact, she was secretly dating Ian. However, several of her family members started noticing a change in her moods as she seemed much happier after her so-called pottery classes. When the family finally discovered the secret romance, Ian attempted speaking with Toula’s father asking his permission to date Toula only to leave the house upset as her father was against Ian as a non-Greek. Many times throughout the movie, Toula explained different practices to Ian.

Most of which Toula, although accustomed to, appeared to be somewhat embarrassed by, “ different cultural practices that govern language use can mystify those involved and they can realistically be portrayed as two people who speak different languages” (Lustig & Koester, 2006, p. 176). Toula and Ian both spoke English, but Toula also learned Greek from a very young age. Toula’s brother and cousin were constantly attempting to teach Ian new phrases in Greek later to discover the phrases had a much different meaning.

These same two mischievous men would attempt to scare Ian by telling him they were going to kill him when they were really joking, or were they. The strange customs practiced by the Greek, mainly because of superstition, were new to Ian. For instance, Toula’s mother would spit on the younger boys’ heads and say a phrase in Greek. Ian was completely disgusted but inquired whether or not she truly spit in his hair. Toula explained that this was a customary type of prayer to ward off the devil. Theorist Perspectives

Comparing the Greek and American cultures of My Big Fat Greek Wedding with Edward Hall’s high and low context cultural theories, it is presumed that this is a high-context relationship. The reasoning for this is “ a simple example of a high-context communication is interactions that take place in a long-term relationship between two people who are often able to interpret even the slightest gesture or the briefest comment” (Lustig & Koester, 2006, p. 111). Toula and Ian became close early in their relationship and even with the differences in their cultures they developed a high-context relationship as defined by Edward Hall’s theory.

Geert Hofstede developed five dimensions to provide an insight into the influences of different cultures, in which “ cultures with similar configurations on the five dimensions would likely have similar communication patterns, and cultures that are very different from one another would probably behave dissimilarly” (Lustig & Koester, 2006, p. 129). After watching My Big Fat Greek Wedding, there were some cultural patterns that seemed similar but more patterns that appeared to be completely different.

The five dimensions are individualism-collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, masculinity-femininity, and time orientation. In comparing these five dimensions, it is more likely than not to pick out the differences between the two cultures. On the scoring for individualism versus collectivism, Greece scores quite low with a negative 34 whereas the United Stated scored at the top with a 200, “ a large positive score means the country prefers individualism” (Lustig & Koester, 2006, p. 118).

Uncertainty avoidance, Greece scores at the top with a 191 and the United States scores a negative 87, “ a large positive score means the country prefers to avoid uncertainty” (Lustig & Koester, 2006, p. 121). Power Distance scores were closer with Greece scoring a 2 and the United States scoring a negative 90, “ a large negative score means the country prefers a small power distance” (Lustig & Koester, 2006, p. 124). The scores for masculinity-femininity were surprising with the United States at 63, but Greece scored a 37.

In comparing this score with the attitudes of the father in My Big Fat Greek Wedding, an individual would think the Greek culture did not approve of women becoming educated or having any power of authority. The last dimension of time orientation was not scored by Geert Hofstede, from the opinions in the movie it appeared as though Greek culture preferred long-term time orientations with the opposite of the United States scoring a negative 60.

These scores appear to be very accurate in comparison to the Greek and American cultures as depicted in My Big Fat Greek Wedding. Conclusion The differences between cultures can be bridged when there is a strong desire by individuals attempting to relate to each other. As in My Big Fat Greek Wedding, Toula and Ian fell in love despite cultural differences and family disapprovals. In the end, both families overcame and accepted the cultural differences by celebrating love in the marriage between a young couple.