

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

Uncertainty Avoidance

This dimension reflects the degree to which a culture embraces the uncertainty of the future. Hofstede argues that since uncertainty can create anxiety, all societies have found coping mechanisms to deal with that anxiety. These coping mechanisms tend to fall into three categories: technology, law, and religion. Those cultures which have a high level of uncertainty avoidance tend to rely very strongly on their set rules and ways of doing things. It may be seen as an attempt to control as much of the uncertainty as possible. [An example of an item in the research tool to assess this dimension is, "Company rules should not be broken – even when the employee thinks it is in the company's best interests" (Hofstede, 1984, p. 121).] Those societies with a lower level of anxiety for the future (low uncertainty avoidance) may be more relaxed about the how things are done.

Educational Implications

<u>High Uncertainty Avoidance</u> <small>(China, Japan)</small>	<u>Low Uncertainty Avoidance</u> <small>(United States)</small>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students expect structured learning situations and seek "right" answers • Teachers are supposed to have all the answers • Students learn that Truth is absolute • Students attribute achievements to effort, context, and luck • Traditional role models for female students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students expect open-ended learning situations and discussions • Teachers may say, "I don't know." • Students learn that truth may be relative • Students attribute achievements to own ability • Independence for female students important

(Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010, p. 169)

Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G. J., Minkov, M. (2010). *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind*. 3rd Edition. USA: McGraw-Hill