



Dimensions of Culture

Directions: Below are descriptions of two of the ten dimensions of culture. Read the descriptions and then answer the reflection questions that follow.

Communication: Direct versus Indirect In this cultural dimension, context matters.	
On the direct communication end of the spectrum, words are the most important factor in communication, and the words should say what you mean and get to the point quickly. Body language and other context clues are not as important. Direct questions are a norm for those from a direct culture—as is eye contact.	With indirect communication , courtesy is highly valued. Direct questions often are considered rude. Context clues are important in communicating a message, and one must read between the lines. Sharing negative information directly is often considered rude, so communication around these issues may include polite excuses, changing the subject, or broad phrases like, “It will be challenging.” Embarrassing others is to be avoided.
Expressiveness: Affective versus Neutral This cultural dimension reflects the ways that people from different cultures <i>express</i> emotions, not the ways that they <i>feel</i> emotions.	
In an affective-oriented culture , emotions are openly displayed. People often use lots of gestures and facial expressions and may be loud or passionate in their speech. Silence can be awkward.	Neutral cultures believe that controlling emotions and being seen as neutral is respectful of others and more dignified. These cultures may not reveal what they are thinking and feeling, and silence is not uncomfortable.

Reflection Questions

After watching the video and learning about the dimensions of culture, did your understanding of French culture change? How so?

How did your descriptions of American culture change?

Why might this shift be important if we work with or visit people of other cultures?

Are all cultures in the United States the same? Why? (Think about different religions, ethnic groups, regional differences.)