

Section 1

Why Collectivists and Individualists Behave Differently

If you are a student from the West, for example from Europe or the U.S., perhaps you have noticed that people from the East, for example Asia or the Middle East, tend to do a lot of activities in groups. Also, people from the East may seem shy around strangers. Conversely, from the viewpoint of people from the East, people from the West appear to be independent, outgoing, and talkative, even among strangers. In Section 1 of this book, we will look at the reasons why people behave differently from each other.

Unit 1: Norms

Normal behavior in a culture

Reading

¹ An American professor was planning his first trip to India. He wrote a letter to the only Western-style hotel in Mysore, the city that he wanted to visit, asking for information about making reservations. He received a reply card that looked like this:

Reservation date: May 15-21

We reserved a room for you for the dates above.

We are unable to provide a room for you for the dates above.

² After seeing the card, the professor ² assumed that the hotel had no rooms and made reservations at a different one. When he arrived in Mysore, he decided to check with that Western-style hotel in order to see if someone else had canceled a reservation. The desk clerk said that they had, in fact, been waiting for him to arrive. The professor showed the clerk the reply card with the “X” next to the line, “We are unable...” The astonished clerk said, “Of course there is an “X” there. We cross out the statements that do not apply.” (Triandis, 1994b).

³ Like this American professor, many of us assume that there is only one “natural” way to do something. However, once we begin having contact with other cultures, we soon realize that there are a variety of “right” ways to do almost everything.

⁴ Researchers asked college students in several different countries to draw a map of the world in 10 minutes and to put in as many details as possible. Almost all the students drew their own country disproportionately large (Whittaker and Whittaker, 1972). This study reveals that it may be human nature to exaggerate how big one's own country is.



Similarly, people tend to believe that their own cultural beliefs and customs are the best or most natural. This tendency to view one's own group as superior to others is called **ethnocentrism**. We are likely to feel that the more another culture is similar to ours, the "better" it is. However, as we experience other cultures, we find that there are reasons why other people do things differently from us. As we saw from the example above about the reply card, the hotel in India had a system that worked well for them even though it was different from the system that someone from another country might use. Neither system was better or worse than the other, just different.

⁵ Understanding different cultures is one of the most important needs in the world today. International students, educators, business people, government officials and travelers all experience new and different customs when they are in a foreign place. Depending on how well they understand those customs, they can find them either interesting and stimulating, or frustrating and painful. In fact, we will see how they have caused misunderstandings for friends, roommates, husbands and wives, teachers and students, employers and employees, and government officials. As one writer said, "Difficulties arise when behaviors considered polite and effective in one culture are seen as rude and inept in another" (Brislin, 2001).

⁶ The purpose of this book is to help you understand not only *how* cultures are different from each other but also *why* they are different. Cultures do not make customs just to be different from other cultures; instead, there are important reasons for these various customs. By understanding why people from different cultures behave differently from us, interact differently from us, have different perceptions, and express their emotions differently from us, we may be able to communicate better with people from all over the world.

⁷ Let's begin our exploration of cultural differences with a survey that may help clarify what proper behavior in a culture is.

A Survey on Proper Behavior

Directions: Answer these questions about what people in your country consider to be proper behavior.

1. **First names:** Should people use other people's first names when talking to them? _____
2. **Paying for others:** If two people go out together (e.g., to a movie or a restaurant), should one of them offer to pay for the other one? _____
3. **Birthdays:** Should people send birthday cards and presents to each other? _____
4. **Visiting:** Is it all right for people to visit someone's home without telling the other person that they are coming? _____
5. **Religion and politics:** Is it all right to talk about religion and politics? _____
6. **Anger:** Is it acceptable for someone to show anger in public? _____
7. **Affection:** Is it all right for two people to show affection in public (e.g., by kissing or holding hands)? _____
8. **Handshakes:** Should people shake hands when they meet someone? _____
9. **Money:** Is it acceptable to talk about someone's own income and financial situation, and to ask others how much money they earn? _____
10. **Eye contact:** Should a person look directly in other people's eyes during a conversation? _____
11. **Marriage:** Is it acceptable for men to have more than one wife? _____
12. **Tattoos:** Is it acceptable for young people to get tattoos? _____
13. **Babies:** Should babies sleep in their parents' beds? _____
14. **Boyfriends/girlfriends:** Is it acceptable for a junior high school student to have a boyfriend or girlfriend? _____

Source: Argyle, Henderson, Bond, Iizuka, and Contarello, 1986.

⁸ If you and someone from a different culture compare your answers to the questions above, it is likely that some of your answers will be different. Every culture has rules about how its members should or should not behave. These rules are called norms. Norms can be considered the "normal" way to behave, or the expected behavior. For example, driving a car on the right-hand side of the road is the norm in the United States and Canada, but driving on the left side is the norm in India and Hong Kong. In a number of American high schools, the norm is for students to wear casual clothes, such as blue jeans, but in a lot of other countries, wearing a uniform is the norm for that age group.

*Tsetse Fly*

⁹ In a certain part of Africa, there used to be a great problem with an insect called the tsetse fly. The flies carried a disease which killed the cows. Without cows, there was no milk for babies, so mothers fed their infants their own milk for at least the first three years of a baby's life. However, if a woman gets pregnant, she will stop producing milk. As a result, it became taboo for women to have sex for the first three years after childbirth, so that she would not become pregnant. For this reason, it became acceptable for men to have more than one wife. In other words, polygamy became the norm for this culture (Triandis, 1994b). As we can see from this African example, there are reasons why different cultures have different norms (i.e., patterns of behavior.)

*Cattle in
Sardinia*

¹⁰ As mentioned above, norms are established by a group, and they specify how the group members should or should not behave. Interestingly, it's possible for the norms of a group to be different from the laws of a country. For example, there is a law against stealing in Italy. However, for cattle herders in Sardinia, in Italy, the norm allows for stealing in certain situations. In the Sardinian culture, equity is the norm, and these cattle herders would explain their norm by saying, "God wants everyone to have the same; when someone has more, we take it away (i.e., steal) to do God's work" (Triandis, 1994b, 100). This has been the norm for many centuries even though Italian law, in fact, prohibits stealing.

Part 1: Study guide for Unit 1

After you have read the information about the hotel reply card in ¶ (paragraphs) 1-2, read this:

You are planning to have a birthday party for your roommate. You send invitations to some friends of yours who have just arrived from India. They return the RSVP (“response”) part of the invitation to you, and it looks like this:

RSVP for the birthday party on October 15
 I will attend the party.
 I will not attend the party.

1. Do you think your Indian friends will come to the party? ____
2. Explain your answer.
3. In ¶ 3, according to the first sentence, many people are apt to think that ____.
 - a) there are many different, normal ways to do things
 - b) there is one correct or normal way to do things
4. In ¶ 4, “disproportionately” means that each student drew their own country ____.
 - a) in the wrong place on the map
 - b) as the only country in the world
 - c) the wrong size compared to other countries
5. In ¶ 4, according to the “map” study, people are likely to ____.
 - a) feel that their country is better than other countries
 - b) feel that people all over the world are similar to each other
 - c) feel that their country is worse than other countries
6. In the survey after ¶ 7, in Questions #2 and #7, there’s the expression, “e.g.” What does “e.g.” mean? (“e.g.” is an abbreviation for a Latin word.)
 - a) in other words
 - b) for example
 - c) especially great

7. In your country, is it the norm to shake hands when you meet someone? _____
 What would happen if you did not follow this norm (i.e., shaking or not shaking hands)?
8. In ¶ 9, it mentions the word “taboo.” Which one of the following situations do you think is considered taboo in most countries?
- A 22-year-old man who gets married to a 22-year-old woman
 - A 25-year-old man who gets married to a 22-year-old woman
 - A boy who gets married to his sister
 - Not getting married
9. According to ¶ 9, why was it sometimes important that the women not become pregnant?
- Because this society didn’t want to have too many children.
 - Because if the women were pregnant, they wouldn’t be able to produce milk for their babies.
 - Because if the women were pregnant, there were diseases that could kill them.
10. The following is a paraphrase of ¶ 10. There are six mistakes underlined in the content, including “the government.” Correct the mistakes by changing words and phrases.

a group

According to the paragraph, norms are made by the government , and they tell people in a culture how they are supposed to behave. In Italy, people are not allowed to steal because there is a norm against it. Nevertheless, in some parts of Italy, stealing cattle is the norm, and thus, it is acceptable in some circumstances. This is because they think that the government expects everyone to be treated equally. For example, if a rich man has 15 cows, and his poor neighbor has only one, the rich man can steal the cow from the poor man. This is a situation in which the norm for a group and the laws of a government are the same.

Part 2: Academic Vocabulary for Unit 1

Exercise 1: Words from context

In the chart below, in the right column, there are definitions of some words from Unit 1. In the middle column, at the top, notice the symbol “¶”. That means “paragraph.” You can find the word that has that meaning in that paragraph. Look in those paragraphs in the article and find the words that have these meanings. The first one is an example. (If you cannot find a word, ask your instructor to give you a first-letter hint.)

Word	¶ *	Find the word that means . . .
1. <i>assumed</i>	2	thought that some information was true without proof
2.	5	exciting; making you think in a new way
3.	6	talk or work together with someone
4.	6	a belief about something because it appears true
5.	10	says that something is illegal -- not permitted)

* The symbol “¶” means **paragraph**. You can find the word in that paragraph.

Exercise 2: Vocabulary Fill-in Exercise

Choose the words in Exercise 1 above to fill in the blanks below.

1. A quiet library is not a good place to go to _____ with your friends.
2. My cell phone wouldn't turn on, so I assumed that the battery was dead.
3. Sending text messages is becoming popular, so our city _____ doing it when people are driving because it is dangerous.
4. Recently, we have been having some warm winters. Thus, people have the _____ that our climate is becoming hotter.
5. I always have _____ conversations with Lee because he has had a lot of interesting experiences.

Exercise 3: Applied Vocabulary

The words in Exercise 1 above may appear below in a different form. For example, *assumed* could be *assume*, *assuming*, or *assumption*.

1. With whom did you interact before you came to class today? _____
2. What do you think is the most stimulating type of movie (e.g., action, drama, Si-Fi, romance, documentary, comedy)? _____ Explain.
3. Which of the following is the correct way to use perception?
 - a) Many people have the perception that the sun rises in the east and sets in the west.
 - b) People in the West often have the perception that Asians are shy.
 - c) There is a perception that January 1st is New Year's Day.
4. Write what you would assume if the following incidents happened to you:
 - a) I look out of the window from my room, and I see a woman who is carrying an umbrella over her head. I would assume that _____

 - b) I am walking down the street. A man in dirty clothes approaches me and asks me if I could give him some money. I would assume that _____
 - c) I am in class. All of my classmates are quietly reading. Suddenly, some of them shut their books, stand up, and start to put their books in the school-bags. I would assume _____
5. Smoking cigarettes is prohibited in most high schools. What is something else that is prohibited in high schools?

Part 3: Preparation for discussion for the Introduction and Unit 1

Think about your answers to these questions. You do not have to write your answers.

1. Do you think that you are ethnocentric? In other words, do you think that your country is better than other countries? Explain your answer.
2. In ¶ 8, it mentions “norms” for how students should dress. Why do you think that some countries require students to wear uniforms?
3. Is polygamy taboo in your country?
4. In ¶ 9, in this example about the people in Africa, do you think that it is strange that polygamy is the norm? Explain your answer.
5. What is one custom from your country that you think would be good for other countries to have?
6. What is one custom from a different country that you think would be good for your country to have?

❖ Note to teacher:

The “Small-group Discussion” questions are included here, in Unit 1, as an example. For all other units, the “Small-group Discussion” questions for groups of three (or four) in the form of separate pages for Students A, B, and C are available in the *Supplementary Activities* or can be downloaded free from www.ProLinguaAssociates.com.

Small-group Discussion

Purpose

In many academic classes, group discussions are very common. These are good opportunities to impress your instructor. Instructors often will give a higher grade to students who try to participate well in group discussions. This activity will help you practice being an active group member.

Also, in many academic courses, students are required to write papers and take quizzes using information from sources (e.g., textbooks and articles). For these papers and quizzes, they need to be able to paraphrase information from the sources. In other words, you cannot just copy from the sources, but rather use your own words and style. In discussion groups, you will have the opportunity to discuss the content from the textbook in your own words and hear how others explain the ideas. After doing a discussions, it will be much easier for you to paraphrase information in papers and on quizzes.

And you can develop your speaking, pronunciation, and listening skills during discussions.

Procedure

In this discussion, you will be in groups of three or four students. One group member will be **Student A**, one will be **Student B**, and one (or two) will be **Student(s) C**. Each member will have different discussion questions. Student A will have questions 1, 4, 7, etc. Student B will have questions 2, 5, 8, etc. Student C will have questions 3, 6, 9, etc. Student A, you will read question 1. If your partners do not understand the question, you should re-read it or explain the question in different words. You should try to let your partners give the answer. If they cannot, you can give the answer. Student B, you will read question 2, and then Student C, you will read question 3, etc.

Small-Group Discussion for Unit 1

Do not write the answers. Do not look at your partners' pages.



Student A

Directions

Read these clarification and discussion questions to your partners, and answer theirs.

1. Explain why the reply card confused the American professor in paragraphs 1 and 2.

4. Explain how the expression “ethnocentrism” is connected to the study about drawing maps in ¶ 4.

7. *This is for discussion. All of us should respond.* In ¶ 8, the article mentions “norms” for how students should dress. Why do you think that some countries require students to wear uniforms?

10. Explain what “polygamy” means in ¶ 9.

13. In ¶ 9, near the end of the paragraph, it says “i.e. patterns of behavior.” What does “i.e.” mean?

16. Let’s check our answers to these:
 - 1) Study guides on pages 5 and 6
 - 2) Vocabulary exercises on pages 7 and 8

Note: ¶ is the symbol for paragraph.

Small-Group Discussion for Unit 1

Do not write the answers. Do not look at your partners' pages.



Student B

Directions

Read these clarification and discussion questions to your partners, and answer theirs.

2. In ¶ 1 and 2, did the clerk put the “X” on the wrong line? Explain.

5. *This is a discussion question. All of us should answer this.* Do you think that you are ethnocentric? In other words, do you think that your country is better than other countries? Explain your answer.

8. Explain the word “taboo” in ¶ 9.

11. *This is for discussion. All of us should respond.* Is polygamy a taboo in your country?

14. *This is a discussion question. All of us should answer this.* What is one custom from your country that you think would be good for other countries to have?

Note: ¶ is the symbol for paragraph.

Small-Group Discussion for Unit 1

Do not write the answers. Do not look at your partners' pages.



Student C

Directions

Read these clarification and discussion questions to your partners, and answer theirs.

3. In your country, how would hotel clerks mark this type of reply card?

6. Look at the survey on page 3 . Let's compare and discuss our answers.

9. Tell me if this is a taboo in your culture. You are standing in line to buy a ticket at a movie theater. Suddenly, a man walks from the back of the line to the front, and he buys his ticket. Would going to the front of the line be a taboo in your country?

12. *This is for discussion. All of us should respond.* In ¶ 9, in this example about the people in Africa, do you think that it is strange that polygamy is the norm? Explain your answer.

15. *This is for discussion. All of us should answer this.* What is one custom from a different country that you think would be good for your country to have?

Note: ¶ is the symbol for paragraph.

❖ For “Whole-class Discussion” techniques and a suggested procedure, see the *Supplementary Activities*, or download it free from www.prolinguaassociates.com.

❖ For “Applied Outside-class Interactions/Observations,” see the *Supplementary Activities*, or download it free from www.prolinguaassociates.com.

Part 4: A technique for writing good answers on tests *Introduce your answers.*

This is a technique that is useful when you are writing answers to quiz questions. When your instructors are reading your answers, it helps them know which question you are answering. Also, it helps you to focus on a question and to start writing your answer.

Exercise 1: Read this situation.

Situation

Wen is a Chinese student who had just started studying at an American college. After the first week of classes, he wanted to talk to his History teacher, so he went to her office. The door was closed, so he knocked twice and without waiting for a response, slowly opened it and walked in. The teacher looked surprised and a little upset (Cushner & Brislin, 1996).



Exercise 2: Analyze the style of students' answers about the *Test Questions*.

- 1) Read the *Test Question* in each box below.
- 2) Write the answers to the *Analysis Questions*.

Test Question 1: Why was the teacher upset at Wen?

Student A's answer:

Because Wen followed a different norm about opening a door to an office.

Student B's answer:

The reason why the teacher was upset was because Wen followed a different norm about opening a door to an office.

Analysis Question 1

Which student's answer is better because he introduced his answer by repeating part of the question? _____

Test Question 2: What do you think is the norm for opening doors in the instructor's culture?

Student C's answer:

The norm in the instructor's culture is probably to knock and then wait for an invitation to come in.

Student D's answer:

To knock and wait for an invitation to come in.

Analysis Question 2

Which student's answer is better because he introduced his answer by repeating part of the question? _____

Test Question 3: What does "upset" mean?

Student E's answer: Angry or irritated.

Student F's answer: Upset means angry or irritated.

Analysis Question 3

Which student's answer is better because he introduced his answer by repeating part of the question: _____

Exercise 3: In this exercise, you will practice introducing answers.

- 1) Read the exam questions below.
- 2) Choose a phrase from the box and fill in the blanks.

- ◆ In the story about the teacher and Wen
- ◆ This situation is interesting to researchers
- ✓ ◆ From the story about Wen
- ◆ The teacher felt
- ◆ The reason why Wen walked into the office

Exam question 1: What can we learn from the story about Wen?

Answer: _____ we learned ...

Exam question 2: Why is this interesting to researchers?

Answer: _____ because ...

Exam question 3: Explain what happened in the story about the teacher and Wen.

Answer: _____, a Chinese student ...

Exam question 4: How did the teacher feel when Wen entered her office?

Answer: _____ irritated.

Exam question 5: Why did Wen walk into his teacher's office?

Answer: _____ was because ...

Exercise 4: Read this situation.

Situation

Betty was an American student who was studying at a university in Germany. Because of her high scores in German, she was able to get a scholarship. After the first week of classes, she joined several of her German classmates at a local restaurant. Some of them asked her about the U.S. policy on nuclear arms as well as about the American president's position on trade and immigration. Betty, who didn't read newspapers very much and was not interested in current events, was not prepared to discuss these topics and didn't say much. As a result, after that, she was not invited to join her classmates when they got together after class.

For German students, the norm is to discuss politics and foreign policy, and they expect their friends to be able to do the same. For the Germans, if someone doesn't participate in these discussions, they feel that that person is not very interested in the Germans (Cushner & Brislin, 1996).



Exercise 5: Write answers to the questions about the information in the box above. Include introductions to your answers (which you practiced in Exercises 1, 2, and 3 above).
Write on other paper.

1. What topics did the German students want to discuss?
2. Why didn't Betty participate very much during the discussion?
3. What does "current events" mean?
4. How do Germans feel if someone does not participate in a discussion about politics?
5. Do you think that Germans and Americans have different norms concerning discussion topics?

Part 5: Preview for Unit 2

Directions: Choose your answers to these questions.

1. Imagine this situation

You are four years old. You are in pre-school (or kindergarten), and you are sitting at a table next to another child. Your teacher gives you a plate with four pieces of your favorite food on it, and the teacher gives the other child a plate with only one piece of food. What would you do?

- a) I would start eating my four pieces of food.
- b) I would give some of my pieces of food to the other child.
- c) I would give some pieces of food to the other child only if someone suggested that I should do that.

2. Imagine this situation

You are four years old. You are in pre-school (or kindergarten), and you are sitting at a table next to another child. Your teacher gives you a plate with only one piece of your favorite food on it, and the teacher gives the other child a plate with four pieces of food. What would you do?

- a) I would start eating my one piece of food.
- b) I would ask, or tell, the other child to give me some of their pieces.
- c) I would take some pieces from the other child if they wouldn't give me any.

3. Think about your answers above and fill in the blanks

(You can write anything that you want in the blanks. There are no right or wrong answers.)

- ◆ I am _____
- ◆ I am _____