

Christmas lunch (turkey, stuffing, Christmas cake, Christmas pudding, flambé, money, mince pies). Anything else, as an advert for plump Christmas turkeys states, "just isn't Christmas".

Clearly, many individuals and groups have other 'variant' rituals, which equally form part of the same culture. Also, Ritchie (1981:223) points out that "what a people believe themselves to be is not invalidated by lack of performance in keeping with the belief". We will now turn to what lies behind the beliefs cultures hold, and what motivates people within their cultures to behave in their various patterned ways.

9.2 Cultural Orientations

In this section we distinguish between general orientations, also known as learning styles, and culturally formed orientations.

• Orientations

- Meta-programs
- Chunk Size
- Separate shapes – Single picture

The word 'orientation' is another case of a nominalization (in this case, a de-verbal noun), suggesting a frozen state. The verb 'to orient' means "to adjust or align oneself according to surroundings or circumstances" (CED 1991). People, in fact, tend to orient their way of doing things consistently over a wide range of circumstances, according to their character or personality. In NLP, these orientations are called 'meta-programs': "perceptual filters that we habitually act on" (O'Connor and Seymour 1993:149). Orientations tend to be consistent, but this is not always the case (emphasis in the original):

Metaprograms are systematic and habitual, and we do not usually question them if they serve us reasonably well. The patterns may be the same across contexts, but few people are *consistently* habitual, so metaprograms are likely to change with a change of context. What holds our attention in a work environment may be different from what we pay attention to at home.

In Chapter 4.7, we noted that much of our imprinting is fully developed by the end of school-age. Likewise, meta-programs, and hence personality, are relatively fixed by that stage. But, as O'Connor and Seymour mention above, our orienting can change across contexts.

It is our orientations which govern *how* perception is generalized, distorted and deleted. A well-known example of how an orientation distorts reality is as follows:

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a bottle that has been opened and drunk from, can either be perceived as being half empty or as half full. Our perception of it has little to do with that actual bottle and the quantity of liquid inside (reality). Perception is distorted to fit in to the way we orient ourselves to the world in general. Our perception of the contents ultimately has to do with who we are. In this case, optimists or pessimists.

One of the orientation meta-programs suggested in NLP regards chunk size. Chunk size has already been introduced during the discussion on local and global translation styles. The polar-opposites of chunk size are the generalities (the context) or the details (the individual words themselves). This chunking orientation has an important place in Gestalt therapy, and is now understood to be a major factor in learning.

To see how we normally and unconsciously chunk, we can look at the following example. The diagram can be perceived in at least four different ways, depending on this local/global orientation.

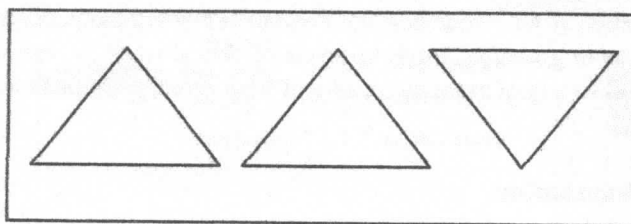


Figure 37. Testing Orientation: Local or Global?

Example descriptions of this diagram are as follows:

1. there are three separate shapes
2. there are some triangles, one upside down, in a picture
3. there is a picture with two identical triangles and one upside down
4. there is a (single) picture of triangles

All four answers are correct, just like the bottle being half-full or half-empty. This sorting of information comes under a variety of names⁶ depending on the field and the application. The terms below come from Gestalt psychology, cognitive psychology and linguistics. Apart from 'sorting' and 'mismatching' which is only to be seen in NLP literature, the other terms now tend to be used across all disciplines:

Separate Shapes	Single Picture
• field independence	field dependence
• sorting for different	sorting for same
• mismatching	matching
• deductive	inductive
• specific	general

⁶ See also Laura Gran's (1989:94) study on brain hemisphere function for a further list of names.

• local/part • analytic • atomist	- global - synthetic - holistic
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Response number one shows a definite orientation towards the left hand column (separate shapes) while number two begins to notice the differences first, and then focuses on the picture. Answer three, instead, begins at the right, focusing on "a single picture" and then moves to the left. Finally, response four focuses exclusively on the whole: the gestalt. "Gestalt" actually means an organized configuration or pattern of meaning.

It should always be remembered that the idea of polarization is a convenient model (deleting, generalizing and distorting the far more complicated reality), and that any orientation is, as the word suggests, no more than a tendency towards one way of perceiving the world. Creating taxonomy of these orientations is necessarily limiting. However, if we remember that none of the orientations operate in isolation, and that, as in grammar, we have levels of delicacy and exceptions, then we can begin to build a useful grammar primer of what actually happens in the context of culture.

• Cultural Orientations

• Kluckhohn's Value Orientations • Hofstede's Four Dimensions • Brake's Ten Orientations
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• The Cultural Iceberg

A cultural orientation is a shared meta-program: a culture's tendency towards a particular way of perceiving. The orientation or meta-program influences how reality is modelled, i.e. which aspects are to be generalized, distorted and deleted. An orientation is based on a number of complex and interrelated (and sometimes conflicting) values, which, as we have seen, are also in dynamic relation with a number of other factors. At the heart lie the fixed and totally-out-of-awareness core values. Figure 38 illustrates the relation between values and orientations.

There are relatively few core values. These generate a number of more context-defined values, (see figure 38 overleaf). A cluster or set of these specific values will result in a certain orientation towards or away from a particular way of perceiving, interpreting and behaving in a number of contexts. Reality, then, within a specific culture will be distorted, generalized and deleted to suit the cultural orientation.

Many authors (and disciplines) have come up with a taxonomy of cultural orientations. Florence Kluckhohn (Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck 1961:341) coined the term 'value orientation', and defined them as follows:

Value orientations are complex but definitely patterned (rank-ordered) principles, resulting from the transactional interplay of three analytically

distinguishable elements of the evaluative process – the cognitive, the affective, and the directive elements – which give order and direction to the ever-flowing stream of human acts and thoughts as these relate to the solution of 'common human' problems.

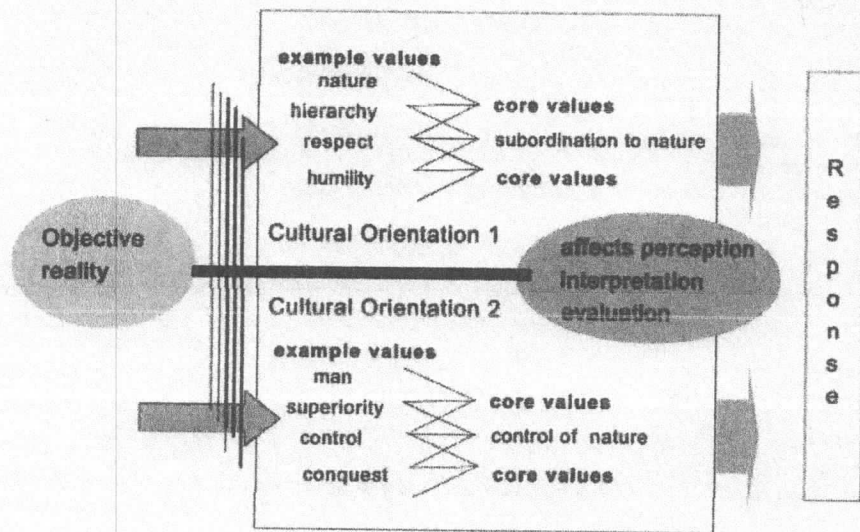


Figure 38. Cultural Orientations

She (ibid.:10-20) suggested that there were five basic problems or concerns common to all human groups, and also mentioned a sixth common human problem, the conception of space, but admitted that the orientation had "not been worked out sufficiently well to be included":

1. What is the character of innate human behaviour?	<i>Human Nature Orientation</i>
2. What is the relation of man to nature (and supernature)?	<i>Man-Nature Orientation</i>
3. What is the temporal focus of human life?	<i>Time Orientation</i>
4. What is the modality of human activity?	<i>Activity Orientation</i>
5. What is the modality of man's relationship to other men?	<i>Relational Orientation</i>

For each of these questions there are three possible responses that constitute a culture's (dominant or variant) value orientations (see table in page 232).

It should be pointed out that every culture and every individual will, in theory, have access to every orientation, but will tend to favour the use of one orientation over the others, and conversely will have difficulty in comprehending the other orientations. A cultural mediator, on the other hand, should have almost equal access to all orientations. This may of course result in disorientation through too much choice, as we shall see in Part 4.

Concerns/ Orientations		Possible responses based on core out-of-awareness beliefs			
Human Nature What is the basic nature of people?	Evil People are basically bad and need to be controlled. People can't be trusted.	Mixed There are both good and evil people in the world. you have to check people out.	Good Most people are good at heart. They are born good.		
Man-Nature Relationship What is the appropriate relationship between man and nature?	Subordinate to Nature People really can't change nature. Life is largely determined by external forces, such as fate and genetics. What happens was meant to happen.	Harmony with Nature Man should, in every way, live in harmony with nature.	Dominant over Nature The great human challenge to conquer and control nature. Everything from air conditioning to the "green revolution" has resulted from having met this challenge.		
Time Sense How should we best think about time?	Past People should learn from history, draw the values they live by from history, and strive to continue past traditions into the future.	Present The present moment is everything. Let's make the most of it. Don't worry about tomorrow: enjoy today.	Future Planning and goal setting make it possible for people to accomplish miracles, to change and grow. A little sacrifice today will bring a better tomorrow.		
Activity What is the best mode of activity?	Being It's enough to just "be". It's not necessary to accomplish great things in life to feel your life has been worthwhile.	Becoming The main purpose for being placed on this earth is for one's own inner development.	Doing If people work hard and apply themselves fully, their efforts will be rewarded. What a person accomplishes is a measure of his or her worth.		
Social Relations What is the best form of social organization?	Hierarchical There is a natural order to relations, some people are born to lead, others are followers. Decisions should be made by those in charge.	Collateral The best way to be organized is as a group, where everyone shares in the decision process. It is important not to make important decisions alone.	Individual All people should have equal rights, and each should have complete control over one's own destiny. When we have to make a decision as a group it should be "one person one vote".		

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) follows Kluckhohn's dimensions adding a further two taken from Talcott Parsons' (1982) 'five pattern variables'. Hofstede

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(1991) has four orientations, which he terms 'dimensions', adapted from the sociologist Alex Inkeles and the psychologist Daniel Levinson (Inkeles and Levinson 1969:447), who suggested four issues which qualified as common basic problems world-wide:

Inkeles and Levinson	Hofstede
1. relationship to authority	Power Distance
2. concept of self, in particular:	
a. the relationship between the individual and society	Individualism/Collectivism
b. the individual's concept of masculinity and femininity	Masculinity/Femininity
3. ways of dealing with conflicts including the control of aggression and the expression of feelings	Uncertainty Avoidance

Brake *et al.* (1995:39) have ten orientations, an amalgamation of Kluckhohn, Talcott Parsons, Hofstede and Hall.⁷ Their taxonomy is the most comprehensive in the literature (to date), and forms the framework for the following sections. At this point we should look at the cultural iceberg (see Chapter 2.4.) once again:

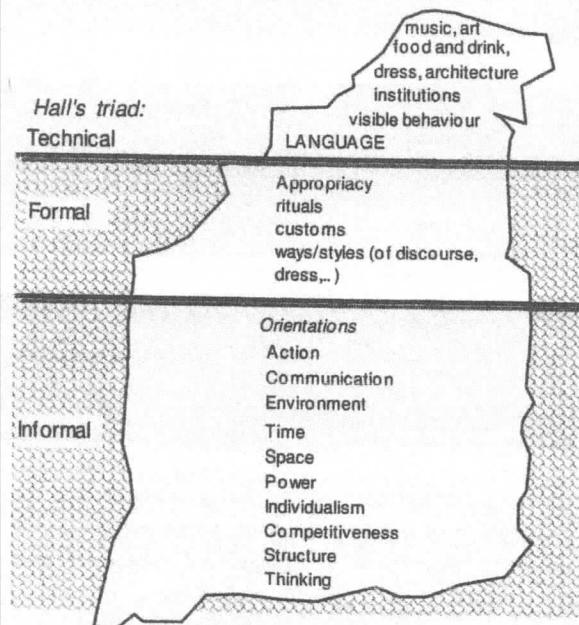


Figure 39. Brake's Iceberg of Cultural Orientations

⁷ Brake *et al.* have integrated other authors too, but those of most interest here are the five orientations introduced by Kluckhohn (Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck 1961); Hall's (1982, 1983, 1990) time, space and contexting, and Hofstede's (1991) four dimensions.