

# ***FINAL PORTFOLIO***

PSYCH – 341 Sociocultural Perspectives

*Kuntheroath Chiv*

*Suffolk University | Dr. Yvonne Wells*

## **Table of Contents**

<i>Long Essay Correction</i>	<b>2</b>
<i>Reference to Discussion Board</i>	<b>4</b>
<i>One Set Study Notes</i>	<b>4</b>
<i>Final Reflection</i>	<b>5</b>

## Long Essay Correction

Power distance refers to the degree to which cultures will encourage less powerful members of groups to accept that power is distributed unequally (Matsumoto and Juang textbook). Between the US and Vietnam, Vietnam has a higher power distance rating and a higher long-term orientation. This means that the culture in Vietnam encourages people to accept that the power structure within the country is distributed unequally. Additionally, long-term thinking is also encouraged. In contrast, the culture in the United States encourages less acceptance of uneven power distributions. The US also does not encourage as much long-term thinking as Vietnam. Furthermore, the US has significantly higher individualism, higher masculinity, higher uncertainty avoidance, and indulgence.

When operating cross-culturally, individuals from the US need to understand that Vietnamese operates under a more hierarchical structure. Therefore, when working in Vietnam, Americans need to accept that they need to work and follow a leader rather than have much autonomy. Americans also need to understand that Vietnamese culture prioritizes long-term planning; therefore, it is more common for people and organizations to take fewer risks and follow plans, rules, and regulations more strictly than US organizations. For this reason, those who take many risks and indulge in instant gratification might not fare well within Vietnamese communities.

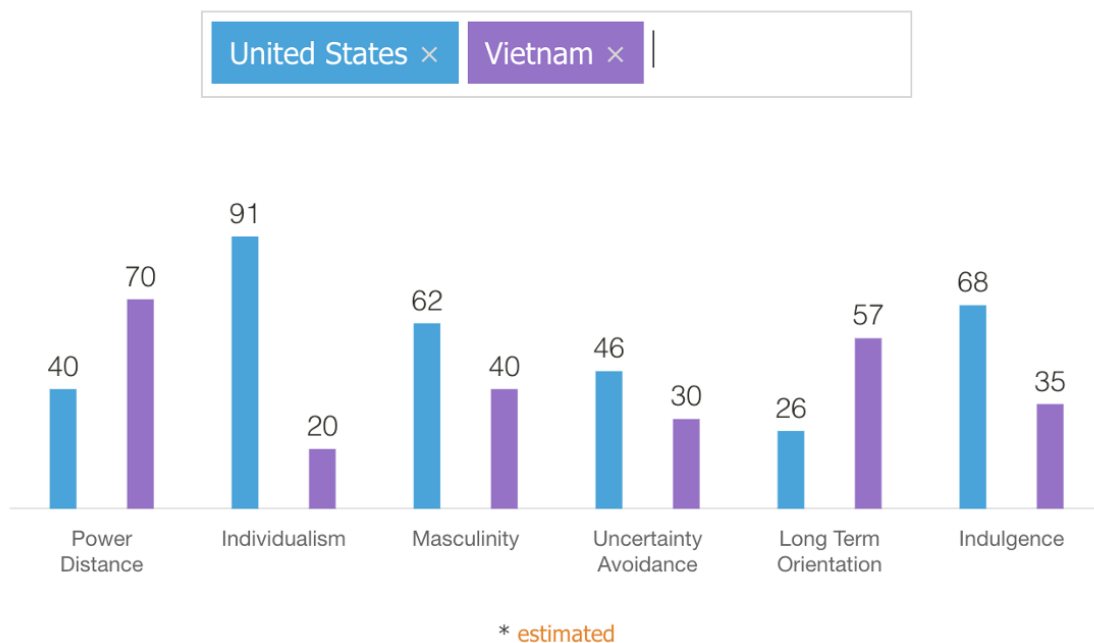
On the other hand, those from Vietnamese cultures might have a challenging time adapting to the US vertical structure and autonomy and their individualism. As the difference in individualism is so significant, an American and a Vietnamese individual might have a more challenging time relating to each other regarding ideals around collectivism and individualism. These differences can also make it challenging for individuals from those two backgrounds to work together, as one would prioritize themselves. In contrast, the other would prioritize the group and feel that the other is selfish. Because Americans are more indulgent, more short-term oriented, and have a higher uncertainty avoidance, those from Vietnamese cultures might also perceive them to be more selfish, reckless, and irresponsible. Therefore, this could also cause conflict when working together or within intercultural associations.

Power distance is higher in Vietnam because it is a developing country; therefore, the structure at a societal level is to prioritize the maintenance of growth and social order. Furthermore, as Vietnam went through a civil war less than 80 years ago, people look to maintaining order, valuing their communities more, and prioritizing working towards a more prosperous future. This is because those who have gone through the trauma of war can experience post-traumatic growth. They start to value relationships more and look towards building a better life than the lives they've had prior to the trauma. These factors can also be a causal factor in why the Vietnamese culture is less indulgent and takes fewer risks than Americans.

On the contrary, because most Americans have never actually experienced war on American soil, people are "less traumatized" at a societal level; thus, allowing many to be more open-minded, be more indulgent, and take more risks. As the freedom citizens in the US are entitled to due to the Constitution, Americans are generally more individualistic because their

individualism is protected by permanent laws of the land that cannot be changed. Additionally, Americans are also encouraged to express individualism as it is seen as a way to progress their society and aid in individual life satisfaction. Furthermore, individualism is also more accepted in the US because of the Constitution. Meanwhile, those in less individualistic countries such as Vietnam can avoid expressing individualism because it can cause problems with the government and their communities. In less individualistic societies, individualism is generally ostracized and frowned upon because they are perceived as selfish and pretentious.

For these reasons, working as a psychologist in each of these countries can be highly insightful as they are almost on entirely different ends of the spectrum. It can help them understand how and which historical and societal factors can affect culture and cause these differences – for instance, war. Because Vietnam and the US have such distinctly different geographical factors as well, it would also be interesting to learn how geographical factors can affect cultures and the differences they may cause. Furthermore, because the US and Vietnam are almost on opposite ends, learning the sensitivities of both cultures can help psychologists apply similar knowledge and understanding to other cultures that may lie in-between.



## Reference to Discussion Board

One discussion board post that reflects my development as a culturally competent future psychologist is the second discussion forum on thin and thick cultures. Prior to learning about thick and thin cultures and the discussions in class, I had never thought about whether I had identified as a member of a thin or thick culture. However, the discussions prompted me to conclude that I belong to a thin culture. Although thick and thin cultures aren't necessarily independent of one another, I believe I'm more thin culture because I do not feel as though I adhere to my culture or any specific culture. However, I do feel a kinship to my gender and people from the same age group. As women, I believe we all go through similar experiences regardless of our cultural background and age.

We had also discussed how social media and growing up in the age of heavy technological advancements had affected us as a generation. It was one of those things we believe transcends culture because regardless of where you come from, the advancements of technology and the internet has had some sort of significant impacts on your culture and your personal development. Compared to previous generations, technology is a fundamental aspect of Generation Z's childhoods. Smartphones and social media are to us what playgrounds or playdates were to previous generations. Therefore, because of these discussions, I have been prompted to learn more about technology and social media's effects on cultures – which inspired my final paper's topic regarding social media's effects on African American women.

## Final Reflection

One class discussion that really stood out was the importance of cultural competency to service providers and the healthcare industry. The clip of the woman going into labor and being mistreated at the hospital, although exaggerated, is still very illuminating in the fact that women of color or people from minority cultures are generally mistreated by service providers and healthcare providers. Personally, as a cis-gendered female, I have also experienced poor treatment from healthcare providers; however, because I am young, I had also associated those experience to the healthcare providers being ignorant rather than culturally incompetent. From the discussions in class, I've learned that it could be both. Additionally, the film clip also showcased how important being culturally sensitive is when working cross-cultural, regardless of whether you are a service provider or not. When working with others from a different culture, I suppose that some degree of cultural competency or sensitivity is required in order to avoid accidentally offending others.

I really enjoyed all the class discussions we've had in groups and as a class. It was very insightful to hear from people from various cultural backgrounds and learn about their experiences as another minority cultural group studying in the US. I have learned a lot from my groupmates around me such as Libby and Carlos. Their passion for psychology is very enlightening and their insights into culture taught me a lot about how being from different cultures can affect our perspectives on the world. It was also fascinating to see our similarities despite those cultural differences – which goes to show how generational factors can affect our perspectives as well.

Another topic that I found extremely interesting was culture and health. I came from a culture that valued both traditional Western biomedical model as well as holistic views of health. However, I have always encountered negative perspectives toward holistic views of health from Western media; therefore, it was interesting to learn that it is considered a legitimate approach to health. Instead of viewing holistic approaches to health as a cultural practice, I've witnessed many people – especially those from Western cultures – try to discredit holistic or traditional medicine because it does not conform to the Western biomedical or biopsychosocial model. Going forward, I would like to learn more about the different types of approach to healthcare and medicine from different cultures. I do not believe in discrediting a culture's medical practices because those practices have gone on for generations because it is effective. Therefore, instead of scrutinizing a practice we do not understand, I would like to see researchers learn more about how and why those practices are effective and approach different cultural medical practices with an open mind.

Hofstede's cultural dimensions was also another theory I believe would be significant to my work moving forward. This is because Hofstede's cultural dimensions help us understand the different functions, values, and characteristics of different countries. This topic would be extremely helpful for anyone looking to work cross-culturally or work in a different culture from their own. The idea of power distance was a concept I found very insightful because it can indicate how entrepreneurial and compliant the workforce will be. Countries or cultures higher on power distance would probably have workforces that prefer structure and a leader to follow; while cultures low on power distance might value more autonomy. Therefore, when working in a managerial position within a different culture, this could be an important concept to keep in mind.

After attending this course, I will approach travel and working cross-culturally with more cultural competence and sensitivities. One major learning lesson from class was to never be afraid of simply asking someone who you can be more culturally sensitive towards them. When traveling or working with others, a person-centered approach should be adopted – focus on what others want or prefer, rather than following your own assumptions and biases (as shown in the film clips).

Although I do not plan to become a psychologist in the future, I do hope to make a difference to my communities by instilling multicultural acceptance and the ideals of cultural competency and cultural sensitivity. As I plan to work in the corporate section, cultural competency is vital when trying to avoid conflict. To further my knowledge of cultural and continue to improve my cultural competency, I plan to read more books and academic articles about cultures and different topics within the sociocultural academic fields.