

## Individual task 1

### Exploring your values

**Clarifying your culture-level value orientations will help you to compare them with others. Please try to list your five strongest values. Then select the one you consider to be most important in your cultural context and explain why.**

Values tend to be at the core of what defines us: concepts or ideals that express what is important or desirable, and the principles that guide our choices.

Because some of our values are deeply rooted or subliminally shared, it is no easy task to identify or write out our values. But it is important to try.

Reflect for a moment on the “dos and don’ts” you have heard over and over from people in your culture. Or regular reminders like “Don’t forget to…” “It is important that you…” etc. What are the concepts, maxims, or principles your grandparents, parents, schoolteachers, or national media have passed on to you? More than likely these comprise some of your culture-level values.

Sometimes these are expressed as important concepts in greetings (like *Aloha!* in Hawaii, or *namaste* in Nepal and India, *sawadee* in Thailand) or farewell blessings, some of which are also expressed with physical gestures, like “crossing oneself” (sign of the Cross) for various Christian expressions of faith.

Sometimes they are expressed by special terms in our native language – words that have broad or deep meaning for our linguistic community. Such “thick” concepts are often difficult to translate because they have so many layers of meaning (examples might include *sisu* in Finnish, *gemütlichkeit* in German, *shalom* in Hebrew, *ren* 仁 in Chinese).

At other times, they are not clearly stated, but lie under the surface and guide a broad range of attitudes, expectations, and behaviors (like the concept of “face,” *mianzi* 面子 or *lian* 脸 in Chinese).

Whether these can be captured by a key word, a phrase, or an advertising slogan (like Nike’s “just do it”) that has been adopted by many people in our cultural groups, it is helpful to try to consider what values seem to be at the core of how we live, communicate, or make decisions fitting to our groups or social expectations. We often call these culture-level values.

Make a list of what you consider to be the most influential five (5) value concepts that guide people in your culture.

After writing out that list, evaluate which one of these is the most important in your cultural context and why. Then share your thoughts about “your top cultural value” with our course participants.

If you have a hard time eliciting this working list or this “most important selection,” it might help you to recall what Prof. Bhawuk said in Step 1.13 of Week 1 (we recommend you re-watch the first 3 minutes of that video):

“...when culture shapes each of these behaviors, it usually provides one right way of doing it, one best way of doing it. And then when we work internationally, globally, then we need to deal

with more than one right way of doing things. So every culture has its own correct way of doing things.”

What do you consider to be that “one right thing” for your cultural context? Why is it such an important value to your group?

**Please share that with us, and discuss some of your responses to the most important value stated by others (in a spirit of understanding and respect for these diverse orientations).**