

# Culture and Entrepreneurship: An Exploratory Essay

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## *Abstract*

*The roles of culture and entrepreneurial disposition in entrepreneurship have been widely researched. Some researchers have concluded that an individualist culture fosters entrepreneurial disposition and entrepreneurship while a collectivist culture retards them. Others have argued that collectivism does not have much bearing on these two factors. This essay explores entrepreneurship in Fiji by focusing on the roles of cultural values and entrepreneurial disposition displayed by the three ethnic groupings - Indo-Fijians, Fijians and Others. The study shows that the higher entrepreneurial achievements of Indo-Fijians and Others are due to the ethics of individual and material acquisition while Fijian entrepreneurship is considerably impeded by collectivism and associated behaviour.*

## **Introduction**

The issue of culture and entrepreneurship is of central importance to Fiji now. Its significance lies not only in terms of the development of capitalism in Fiji, but also in terms of the discourse on ethnic relations in the country. In 1997, the Governor of the Reserve Bank of Fiji stated that it was 'all too common to hear that the Fijian culture is inappropriate for business', and that culture was treated 'as a problem' (Narube, 1997: 242). He argued for a change in paradigm, and called for integrating culture in business solutions: 'Business training must reflect this change in strategy and examine ways in which we can use the culture as a medium of business' (1997: 242). Narube went on to list some possibilities for ex-

amination. But he left unattended the issue of whether culture really is a problem for entrepreneurship in Fiji.

A large number of researchers are now of the opinion that culture could explain either the presence or absence of entrepreneurial dispositions in a population. An entrepreneurial culture generates entrepreneurial disposition and draws upon a variety of psychological, social, economic and environmental factors that include individualism, creativity, innovation, materialism, hard work, vision, savings and investment, punctuality, strategic vision and government encouragement.

The issue has often been viewed in terms of an individualism-collectivism dichotomy. Many writers have associated entrepreneurship with individualism (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede and Bond, 1988; Busenitz and Lau, 1996; Epstein, 1996; Dana, 1997). There is substantial literature suggesting that collectivism retards entrepreneurial development (Rakoto, 1975; Hailey, 1987, 1988; Ravuvu, 1988; Davies, 2000). From these works, one could conclude that cultures that foster individualism stimulate entrepreneurship.

It is, however, still debatable whether certain individual personality traits could be isolated to explain individualism and thus entrepreneurship. Gartner (1988) argues that any research that attempts to isolate personality traits associated with entrepreneurship has become dead-end tasks. Similarly, Robinson et al. (1991) proposes that further research on the subject area is likely to yield diminishing returns. This has prompted researchers to refocus their investigation on a range of alternative variables including culture. In this approach, culture is used as a proxy for generating personality traits.

### **Cultural Diversity and Entrepreneurship in Fiji**

Fiji has a diverse population characteristic. Ethnic Fijians and Ethnic Indians comprise the majority of the country's population. But there is a significant population mix so as to produce a wide cultural diversity. Even within each ethnic/cultural group, there is the presence of sub-cultural groupings which may have another bearing on the issue.

Although the adoption of Christianity by Fijians about one hundred and fifty years ago has provided a broad explanation for the Fijian philosophy of living, Fijian culture remains predominantly traditional. But this traditionalism is more limited to their interface with the market. In terms of Christianity, ethnic Fijians are regarded as equally modern as their European counterparts. Individual ownership of means of production, however, is largely absent within the Fijian community. Thus, there

is only a marginal presence of ethnic Fijians in the community of entrepreneurs.

In contrast, ethnic Indians, who mostly follow the Hindu and Islamic religions like their ancestors in India, are less traditionalists in terms of their approach to the market. However, there are some clear cultural differences between the Indo-Fijians and the people of the Indian subcontinent. While the rural Indians, Pakistanis, and Bangladeshis may generally be seen as conservative and collectivist, their Fiji counterparts appear to be liberal in outlook and predominantly individualistic. Generally, a significant number of Indo-Fijians have made significant progress in modern business.

The population category called 'Others', comprising Chinese and Europeans, and those with parentage in them, have recorded substantial achievements in business.

The question that arises, then, is: why is it that Fijians are the only group to have underperformed commercially? Could culture have a bearing on the entrepreneurial dispositions exhibited by the respective ethnic groupings?

### **Culture, Risk-taking and the Spirit of Capitalism**

Some research studies done in Seychelles and Malaysia raise important questions on the link between culture and entrepreneurship. Benedict (1979) proceeded to enquire why Seychellois of Chinese origin showed entrepreneurial disposition whilst indigenous Seychellois did not do so to the same extent. The Seychelles is a group of islands in the Indian Ocean with a population of 80,000 comprising mainly Creoles (who are of mixed African and European descent). Chinese and Indian entrepreneurs constitute a small but prominent minority. The Creoles are mostly Roman Catholics and most of the Indians are Hindus or Muslims. The Chinese are generally Christians.

Benedict's enquiry showed that the entrepreneurial success of Chinese businessmen was attributable to family support and hard work. For the ethnic Indians, it was not religion per se, but culture more generally that led to their success.

Creole culture was characterised by the predominance of the 'matri-focal or matricentric family' (Benedict, 1979:311), under which the woman and her children are the focus of the household, while the husband plays a peripheral role by maintaining the family. However, a 'male without money is not a man. He shows he has money by spending it, not

by saving or investing it' (Benedict, 1979: 312). Those Creoles who overcame the cultural barrier and became entrepreneurs generally failed, because constant quarrels between husband and wife over the management of income subsequently led to marital separation. Since business enterprises based on such fragile foundations were unlikely to survive marriage breakdown, some Creoles opted to run their enterprises individually and not as a family. Enterprises which hired outside employees achieved considerable success.

Benedict (1979) identified a number of other challenges encountered by Creole entrepreneurs. The major obstacle concerned credit management with clients. Like the Fijian system of *kerekere*, Creole entrepreneurs advanced credit to friends and relatives who had no intention of paying back the debt or who had no financial capacity for repayment. Through strict and prudent financial management, Indian and Chinese entrepreneurs did not experience this problem. A Creole villager operating a business within a family environment was under heavy social pressure to advance credit to members of the extended family based on family relationship rather than any ability to pay. The male ethic of big spending also explained why so many Creole shopkeepers failed.

Apart from these cultural obstacles, a major non-cultural barrier militating against Creole entrepreneurship was under-capitalisation and a lack of credit from suppliers - problems similar to those faced by Fijian entrepreneurs. Rowe (1959) summed up the cultural philosophy of the Creoles as follows: 'As individuals they conclude that the best thing they can do is to try and ensure that things will not get too difficult for themselves in their lifetime .... As a community their attitude is to live for the present and ignore the future' (quoted in Benedict, 1979: 318).

In contrast to Creole entrepreneurs, Indian and Chinese entrepreneurs in the Seychelles had a strategic vision of themselves and their families. They are customer-oriented, and introduce new products to attract clients. In both communities, the whole family works for the enterprise, often putting in long hours for no financial reward very much like the Indo-Fijian and Chinese communities in Fiji.

The Seychelles situation has a close parallel in Fiji. The patterns of the Creole culture and of Creole entrepreneurs appear to be similar to those of the ethnic Fijians, notably the practice of borrowing money and goods. The entrepreneurial skills displayed by the Indo-Fijians and Chinese in Fiji parallel the entrepreneurial achievements of Indians and Chinese living in the Seychelles. The Creole philosophy of living is not much different from the ethnic Fijian one. Ethnic Fijians have been described as lacking punctuality and for not having a 'thought for the remote future'

(Coulter, 1967: 70). An ethnic Fijian's lack of attention to time has been highlighted by Qalo (1997), as follows:

The concept of time is a difficult one for the average Fijian to grasp fully even today. Time is *gauna* in Fijian. *Gauna* is very broadly marked in *mataka caca* (very early morning i.e. before dawn), *mataka* (after sunrise), *sigalevu* (anytime from 8.00am to 5.00pm), *yakavi* (very late afternoon), *yakavi-bogi* (evening), *bogi* (night). Time is not detailed into hours, minutes and seconds.... One of the biggest problems of meeting and doing business with Fijians is their disregard for time which is a disregard for punctuality and efficiency. These are important concepts in business and life today. It is not unusual that members arrive late to ... board meetings and on several occasions some have had to wait for hours to get a quorum (Qalo, 1997: 145-146).

Other Pacific island nations have also attracted some research on culture and entrepreneurship. A survey carried out in the 1980s in selected countries in the South Pacific showed that culture played a mixed role in entrepreneurial development. With reference to the Cook Islands, Fairbairn (1988) observed that the entrepreneurial success of Cook Islanders was due to hard work, honesty, reliability, motivation, perception of opportunities and ruthlessness in pursuing goals. In Samoa, Croulet (1988) observed that traditions still affected rural entrepreneurship including the practice of *Fua Kavenga* (similar to Fijian *kerekere*). Samoans were noted as being 'socially well-disposed to the attributes of saving, hard work, specialization, and upward motivation, all of which are necessary for entrepreneurship to succeed' (Croulet, 1988: 93). The social and cultural obstacles which limit their capacity to capitalise on entrepreneurial opportunities included the matai social structure and a strong religious orientation. It is noteworthy that Samoa has one of the strongest economies in the South Pacific.

In Tonga, Ritterbush (1988) used the Parsonian 'ascriptive/achievement' continuum to describe the status of entrepreneurs operating in different cultural contexts. The Parsonian view expounds that a small percentage of people in any society will exhibit an entrepreneurial disposition. Where entrepreneurship is not given due recognition and status, the capacity for creativity and innovation will be curtailed. The 'ascribed-status' society of the Kingdom of Tonga was traditionally anti-enterprise, with status derived through social relationships rather than through entrepreneurial achievement. In Tonga, entrepreneurship is influenced by culture including *fakamolemole* (which is similar to *kerekere*).

*Fua Kavenga*, *fakamolemole* and other obligatory contributions severely affect the cash flow situation of Samoan and Tongan entrepreneurs. Non-compliance with *Fua Kavenga* particularly is an invitation to anger, disrespect and ostracism.

A recent survey by Reddy (2001) of managers in the South Pacific showed that despite the passage of time national culture, particularly among the indigenous people, is as strong as it was before. Reddy found that the Fijian 'cultural environment is not supportive of business as its cultural milieu creates considerable hindrance to business' (2001: 102). Since communal interests come first, Reddy concluded that managers are 'expected to help relatives, kin, and members of the extended family, and others in their community' (2001: 102). He found a similar social environment existing in Samoa.

With respect to Indo-Fijians, Reddy found that their cultural attributes were 'the willingness to invest in anticipation of future returns, saving from current income, frugality, risk-taking for bigger returns in the future, sacrifice and hard work on an individual basis now for greater consumption in future' (2001: 102). In the Solomon Islands, Reddy found that the major cultural hindrance was that the interest of one's *wantok* 'takes precedence over an individual's interest' (2001: 153). The *wantok* custom allows an individual to obtain assistance in cash and kind from friends, relatives, etc. without paying back. The situation is similar in Kiribati where the custom of *bubuti*, which has similar connotations as *wantok*, or *kaivata*, is a great hindrance to business.

Research in other parts of the world confirms the strong influence of culture on entrepreneurship. Williams and Narendran (1999) compared managers in India and Singapore on the basis of ethnicity. They found that managers detached from their cultural values showed a marked disposition towards risk-taking behaviour. In Hong Kong, the most significant element stimulating entrepreneurship is the culture of the entrepreneurs (Yu, 1997). Yu cited the example of Shanghainese males (people born in Shanghai, China, and residing in Hong Kong), who are expected to be masters of their own business; otherwise they would be regarded as failures. Such cultural expectations appear to unleash latent entrepreneurial forces within the Shanghainese. Herbig and Golden stressed the importance of an entrepreneurial environment to entrepreneurial success as follows:

Cultures that do not reward entrepreneurs or new ideas will have a tendency to inhibit ideas. Despite having the best infrastructure in Asia when Britain left, India has failed to lead Asia economically. Instead it has been Hong Kong, South Korea, Singapore, and Tai-

wan, all countries which had substantially fewer infrastructures. The difference was in the acceptance of the innovative spirit by the culture (Herbig and Golden et al., 1994: 39).

## **What is culture?**

Culture is a complex subject and is difficult to summarise concisely. To understand culture one needs a multidimensional approach, including an understanding of psychology, sociology, and anthropology. A number of definitions do exist (Brislin, 1983), but no consensus is evident (Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey, Chua, 1988). As Eagleton (2000: 1) states: 'Culture is said to be one of the two or three most complex words in the English Language, and the term which is sometimes considered to be its opposite – nature – is commonly awarded the accolade of being the most complex of all'. The word 'culture' has encompassed 164 different definitions (McGrath, MacMillan and Scheinberg, 1992).

One of the earliest definitions of culture was given by Taylor (1881), who defined it as 'that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society' (quoted in Fan, 2000: 3). Fan (2000: 3-4) defined culture as 'the collection of values, beliefs, behaviours, customs, and attitudes that distinguish a society. A society's culture provides its members with solutions to problems of external adaptation and integration'. Herbig and Dunphy (1998: 13) stress that culture is:

an all inclusive system of communications which incorporates the biological and technical behaviour of human beings with their verbal and nonverbal systems of expressive behaviour. Culture is the sum total of a way of life, including such things as expected behaviour, beliefs, values, language, and living practices shared by members of a society; it is the pattern of values, traits, or behaviours shared by the people within a region.

Some of the important definitions of culture that have emerged in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are outlined in Appendix I.

It may be concluded that culture is an integral part of human existence constituting 'enduring principles' which guide human beings in their relationship with the environment. The subjective components of culture include beliefs, attitudes, norms, and values. Initially, culture was studied as part of anthropology and sociology. In his landmark cross-cultural psychological study of national behaviour, Hofstede (1980) extended the investigation into the domain of business and management. He

aimed to enhance the interpretation of human behaviour at the workplace in the context of culture. Culture was viewed as a set of 'mental programs'. As shown in Appendix II, Hofstede distinguished them at three levels and argued that at the 'universal' level mental programming is common to all human beings and includes behaviours such as 'laughing' and 'weeping'. 'Collective' mental programming takes place at a level above the 'universal'. As indicated by its name this behaviour is common to a group of people in a society or a country. Examples include the behaviours of Aborigines, ethnic Fijians, Arabs and Indians. Hofstede's 'individual' level of human programming suggests that individual behaviour is different from others and that each person makes independent decisions. Hofstede concluded that 'universal' mental programs are inherited, 'individual' mental programs are partly inherited and partly learnt, and that the 'collective' mental program is entirely learnt.

Berger (1991) suggests a broader definition of entrepreneurship in order to provide a better understanding of the role of culture in entrepreneurial development. According to Berger, culture:

encompasses all the shared ways of thinking, believing, understanding, and feeling as well as those of work practices, consumption, and social interaction in general. Slowly and incrementally the elements that constitute a new manner of life become habituated, routinized, and eventually institutionalized, provided political realities permit them to unfold (Berger, 1991: 22).

Thus, behaviour that becomes 'habituated', 'routinized' and 'institutionalized' and taken to the field of business has the potential either to foster entrepreneurship or stifle it.

### **National Cultures and Cultural Values**

What is national culture? Unless a definition agreeable to all constituent groupings in a country is arrived at, it will be difficult for that country to promote a national culture. In this sense, achievement of a national culture should be a long term objective. When different ethnic groupings in a country agree to foster shared values etc., a national culture is said to emerge. In a sense, a national culture appears to exhibit the essence of civic nationalism, which 'anticipates a common humanity which transcends cultural differences, but in the meantime accepts the division of the world in different political communities. Its objective is the construction of a representative state for the community in order to participate as an equal nation in a developing cosmopolitan civilization

based on reason' (Dikotter, 1996).

Beliefs, attitudes and behaviour are rooted in values which people hold dearly. Collectively, these eventually become engrained into national culture.

Cultural values may be examined at a number of levels (Fan, 2000). They may be studied at the international level (e.g. East versus West); at the national level (e.g. Japanese vs Australian culture); at the regional level (culture and sub-culture, e.g. Aboriginal or Indo-Fijian culture); business culture (e.g. profit above customer satisfaction), and organisational culture (e.g. emphasis on punctuality and deadlines).

Fiji has been struggling to create a national culture because of the heterogeneity of its population. A fairly homogeneous society, such as Tonga, has fewer constraints and enjoys greater latitude. This is because the norms and values of groups in homogeneous societies are fairly uniform, compared with heterogeneous societies, which are characterised by loose cultures (Triandis, 1989). Homogeneity has the necessary ingredients to bind different ethnic groupings into a cohesive and composite society thereby minimising the recurrence of ethnic and political tensions. Eagleton writes:

What culture does ... is distil our common humanity from our sectarian political selves, redeeming the spirit from the senses, wresting the changeless from the temporal and plucking unity from diversity. It signifies a kind of self-division as well as a self-healing, by which our fractious, sublunary selves are not abolished, but refined from within by a more ideal sort of humanity (2000: 7-8).

The fact that a national culture generally arises comparatively easily from a homogeneous population does not mean that a multicultural or heterogeneous society cannot have a national culture. The United States is said to have a dominant national culture often described as American culture, which influences the various subcultures, such as the Vietnamese, Korean, Islamic, Indian and Buddhist cultures. Even the 'American culture' emerged after decades of interaction of the widest range of greater European cultures, with perhaps religion being the only common denominator. The subcultures are communities based on region, race, language, religion, age, social class, or other factors (Decrop, 1999). Members of the subculture typically 'conform to many of the norms of the dominant culture, but deviate from other norms which are not compatible with those of their sub-culture' (Decrop, 1999: 110).

Although Fiji lacks a national culture, it has three distinct subcul-

tures each associated with the three distinct ethnic groupings. Appendix III illustrates the relationship between a dominant culture and subculture and between subcultures (as a subculture may influence another subculture). The level of dominance exerted by the major culture depends on the extent to which the relevant subcultures may be described as 'loose' or 'tight'. To varying degrees a strong subculture may influence the dominant culture.

A national culture provides citizens with a sense of common identity and a means of relating to one another, thereby minimising inter-ethnic conflicts and jealousy. Judging by the current political problems in Fiji, the people of Fiji have a long way to go before the country may be said to have achieved a common identity and national culture. Hopefully, the initiative of Fiji's Ministry of Reconciliation and Multi-Ethnic Affairs may go some way in hastening the process of building a national identity and a sense of common purpose.

### **The Relationship between Cultural Values and Entrepreneurship**

From the foregoing definitions of culture a logical correlation may be assumed between cultural values and attitudes within a society. Individuals who share similar cultural values are likely to exhibit similar attitudes towards a number of issues faced by society more generally. Such issues may include gender equality, education, corruption, religious beliefs, environmental protection, democratic procedures and entrepreneurship. Consistent with the primary focus of this thesis, the following discussion examines the relationship between cultural values and entrepreneurship.

Berger states:

Because entrepreneurship is embedded in culture, such dynamics must be incorporated into our studies of it. .... modern entrepreneurship is a distinctly new variant of a timeless species, created and sustained by culture and creature of it at the same time (Berger, 1991: 7).

Weber, the German philosopher, first identified a link between the 'Spirit of Capitalism' and the 'Protestant Work Ethic' and attributed the success of entrepreneurs to the values of frugality, deferred gratification, and asceticism, all of which are the basis of the Protestant culture (Dana, 1997). Dana observed that certain ethnocultural groups may possess entrepreneurial values common to other ethnic groups. The non-Protestant Japanese, for example, have espoused Confucian values such as hard

work, diligence, and frugality and have achieved considerable entrepreneurial success, regardless of the apparent incompatibility of entrepreneurship with Confucian ethics (Petersen, 1971). Confucian values have a major impact on entrepreneurship particularly in Chinese societies.

A number of writers (Hofstede, 1980; Epstein, 1996; Dana, 1997; Herbig and Dunphy, 1998) have found that those countries showing highest economic growth are inhabited by people possessing highly individualistic values. Certain Asian countries contradict this trend by exhibiting economic success while being low on individualism. Hofstede explained this aberration by the addition of a fifth index that measured the impact of Confucian values that reward hard work, thriftiness, obedience, benevolent leadership and harmony (Lasserre and Schutte, 1995).

In 1971, Gunnar Myrdal listed thirteen cultural traits deemed to be important in economic development, namely efficiency, diligence, orderliness, punctuality, frugality, scrupulous honesty, rationality in decisions on actions, alertness to opportunities as they arise in a changing world, energetic enterprise, integrity and self-reliance, cooperativeness, and the willingness to take the long view (Herbig and Dunphy, 1998: 17-18). Citing India as an example, Myrdal noted that the unproductive behaviour of its people until then was rooted in Indian culture which impeded its development since independence. Based on the work of Sinha (1978), Dana wrote that Indians believed that 'being passive and content with the status quo is more healthy for the inner soul than striving to improve one's situation' and that 'peace of mind can be achieved from spiritual calm rather than from materialism' (2000: 87). In view of their entrepreneurial successes it is doubtful if Indo-Fijian entrepreneurs hold such beliefs.

Studies by Dana (1997) and Yu (1997) in Lesotho and Hong Kong respectively, show positive correlations between national culture and entrepreneurship. Busenitz and Lau (1996:33) concluded that those 'ethnic groups that are higher in individualistic values will be more prone to found [sic] their own business than those with a stronger collectivist value'. Economist Sowell expanded this view and argued, with references to Mexico, a country with a high incidence of poverty, and Japan, that wealth and poverty are determined by cultural traditions (Epstein, 1996: 50). Epstein attributes Japan's high standard of living to the fact that its national culture fosters entrepreneurship. Herbig and Dunphy (1998) suggested that cultures that emphasise individualism and freedom are more likely to show creativity and innovation and thus entrepreneurship. In Zimbabwe, Chitsike (2000) found culture had a negative influence on the self-confidence and autonomous economic activities of women. For Fiji,

Hailey argued that Fijian culture restricts 'individualism, individual mobility, and thus individualistic entrepreneurial activities' (1985: 19). Various restrictions under the Native Affairs Ordinances (not lifted until the 1960s) prohibited Fijians travelling away from their villages and 'limited [their] mobility and access to finance and did nothing to encourage Fijian participation in business' (Hailey, 1985: 20).

The effects of religious values can also have a profound impact on entrepreneurship (Hagen, 1975). The vast disparities in entrepreneurial contributions by the Lebanese ethnic groupings, for example, are explained by religious values (Hagen, 1975). This view reinforces the general view that Jewish people have been highly entrepreneurial in most other countries.

Some researchers have rejected the idea that some cultures are more entrepreneurial than others. Having analysed the recent South East Asian financial crisis, Johnson and Lenartowicz concluded that the 'mere presence or absence of cultural values is insufficient to explain economic growth' (1998: 354). They argued that the social and economic development of a country also depends upon economic liberalisation and personal freedom. Similarly, the entrepreneurial successes of Asian immigrants in the USA in the post-Vietnam period, have been attributed not so much to culture, but to an ability to access capital through informal channels known as Rotating Saving and Credit Societies (Chotigeat, Balsmeier and Stanley, 1991). With reference to Africa, Nafukho (1998) argued that, while recognising the contribution of culture to an enterprising personality, entrepreneurship was also dependent on the financial, administrative, legal and educational infrastructure of that country. Yusuf (1995) concluded that the most critical factors in South Pacific entrepreneurship are good management, access to financing, personal qualities of the entrepreneur, good infrastructure and pro-entrepreneurial government policies. Culture did not figure in his analysis.

There may be societies where entrepreneurship does not flourish because of negative associations, or discouragement. In such societies, foreigners may be the main beneficiaries of entrepreneurial opportunities (Dana, 1997). The Javanese carry with them a negative connotation of entrepreneurship because in Javanese the word 'trader' means a 'foreigner', 'tramp', or 'wanderer' (Becker, 1956 cited in Dana, 1997). During the 1950s and 1960s in Kenya, it was considered impolite to be rich, or to flaunt wealth, because of an association with venality (Dondo and Ngumo, 1998). The church discouraged entrepreneurship by issuing a malediction against the rich that 'it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter heaven' (quoted in Dondo and

Ngumo, 1998: 17). For God-fearing Kenyans, such ecclesiastical proclama- tions must have created extreme fear in the minds of potential entre- preneurs. Remnants of such fear have continued to stifle entrepreneurship in Kenya. Even it has been found that the Norwegian culture discourages entrepreneurs (Peterson, 1988), while the Egyptian culture discourages individual entrepreneurship, except in the informal sector (Brockhaus, 1991).

Invocation of God for the continuous success of entrepreneurship seems to be a phenomenon more commonly found in collectivist socie- ties, such as Malaysia where entrepreneurial success is attributed to the deity. The following extract highlights the critical role that Allah is viewed as playing in the life of Malay entrepreneurs:

Prime Minister Mahatir believes, as he stated in his holiday speech on laziness to the nodding assent of my informants, that people who work hard towards progress are usually rewarded more than those who do not. While this leaves the ultimate decision about who will be rich and who will be poor in the agency of Allah, my informants generally stated that Allah does not like poverty, for which it ad- heres a taint of laziness, passivity, and irresponsibility that allows time for sin. It is now generally agreed upon that Malays must work hard to honour Allah's abundant worldly gifts, which include the enormous advances provided to them during NEP [New Economic Policy] (Sloane, 1999: 64).

It is generally believed that Malays have not been able to emulate the success of Chinese entrepreneurs because their spiritual values and philosophy of life do not encourage wealth accumulation. This school of thought appears at odds with the teachings of the Prophet Mohammed. Alatas explains that Islam offers encouragement for entrepreneurship:

The teachings of Islam encourages diligence, frugality, discipline, a rational approach within the ends and means context, active partici- pation in commerce and industry. Mohammed was the only one among the great founders of religion who was himself a trader. The spiritual leaders of the Islamic world such as the famous Imams and Sufis were mostly people who derived their livelihood from trade and industry. Islam was spread to South-East Asia by traders. From the teaching, as well as the history of Islam, there are sufficient sources of inspiration and directives for a vigorous entrepreneuring life. There is also the doctrine of the calling, in a sense. A man who succeeds to acquire wealth through honest and diligent effort is fa- voured by God (1973: 160).

Individualistic and collectivist values may be instrumental in either the presence or absence of entrepreneurship in a society. There is, however, no certainty of view on whether there is any linear relationship between individualistic values and economic growth, and between collectivist values and low economic development.

Fisk's (1970) analysis of the entrepreneurial success, or otherwise, of the three ethnic groupings in Fiji still holds some weight. Fisk argued that Europeans and Chinese 'brought with them and retained the culture and economic attitudes of the commercially sophisticated societies' of their origin (1970: 44). Indo-Fijians were similarly motivated and earned enough money for survival. This was their top priority. The Indo-Fijian farmer does not have the opportunity to expand much on his land and so is highly motivated to maximise his earnings by whatever means. In comparison, Fisk found that although the desire to accumulate money was present among ethnic Fijians, they and their families were less motivated towards the money economy. A Fijian, according to him, is never faced with abject poverty (because of *kerekere*) and his failure in business does not carry any stigma since he can return to the reasonable comfort of his village life if things do not go well. The latter option involves less work, effort and risk-taking. Fisk's observations do seem to suggest that cultural factors provide an important context for the practice of entrepreneurship.

### **Individualist and Collectivist Values**

There is a wide range of studies on cultural variation including individualism and collectivism.<sup>1</sup> As noted earlier, values serve as guiding principles in life and each value is important in explaining key cultural issues. Values may be distinguished by reference to such criteria as instrumental or terminal goals, individualism and/or collectivism, and by 12 motivational domains (Braithwaite and Scott, 1991). In developing an understanding of entrepreneurship, the individualistic-collectivist dichot-

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<sup>1</sup> See Gundykunst, Ting-Toomey and Chua (1988). Authors that have been often cited include Parsons and Shils (1951), Tonnies (1961), Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961), Lebra (1976), Hofstede (1980), Hsu (1981), Yang (1981), Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler and Tipton (1985), Marsella, DeVos and Hsu (1985), Western (1985), Yum (1987), Hui and Triandis (1986), and Triandis (1986). Others who have contributed to individualism-collectivism research include Hofstede and Bond (1984, 1988); Wager and Moch (1986); Hui (1988); Earley (1989); Morris, Davis and Allen (1994); Triandis (1995); Fijneman and Willemsen (1996); Earley and Gibson (1998); Niles (1998); Triandis, Chen and Chan (1998); and Oishi and Schimmack et al. (1998).

omy appears most critical. This is explored in the remainder of this paper.

Parsons and Shils (1951) first introduced the individualism/collectivism distinction when they differentiated between a 'self-orientation, or focus on ego-integrative morals, and a collectivity-orientation, or a focus on the social system' (quoted in Erez and Earley, 1993: 77).<sup>2</sup> Since individualism-collectivism may be considered 'a continuum rather than a dichotomy' (Chen, Chen and Meindl, 1998: 290), individualists and collectivists are capable of exhibiting both types of goals. The Japanese are collectivists in a cultural sense, but also exhibit individualistic traits in their entrepreneurial behaviour. This is similar to the Indo-Fijians, who are collective at home but individualistic at work and in business. Europeans appear to be individualistic at home as well as at work, whereas Fijians generally exhibit collectivism at home and at work.

The proposition that individualism-collectivism variables could be neatly divided has met with criticism (Schwartz and Roa, 1995). Such criticisms are relatively isolated. Thus, the two constructs may be regarded as valuable tools for understanding entrepreneurship (Hofstede 1980, Triandis, 1995). An individualistic culture is described as one in which individual needs and goals are given precedence over the needs and goals of other group members. Triandis (1995) defined individualism as a form of 'cultural syndrome' that shows:

a social pattern that consists of loosely linked individuals who view themselves as independent of collectives; are primarily motivated by their own preferences, needs, rights, and the contracts they have established with others; give priority to their personal goals over the goals of others; and emphasize rational analyses of the advantages and disadvantages to associating with others (Triandis, 1995:2).

Waterman (1984) proposes that individual cultures promote 'self realization' for their members:

Chief among the virtues claimed by individualist philosophers is self-realization. Each person is viewed as having a unique set of talents and potentials. The translation of these potentials into actuality is considered the highest purpose to which one can devote one's life. The striving for self-realization is accompanied by a subjective sense of rightness and personal well-being (as quoted in Gudykunst, et al., 1988: 40).

In the context of Fijian society, Deane (1921) observed that under

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<sup>2</sup> Other relevant work on this are by Mead (1967), Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1967), Hofstede (1980b), and Triandis (1989).

the ancient system of communalism, any expression of entrepreneurship by Fijians was difficult. Ravuvu (1988) noted that it is difficult for Fijians to separate themselves from other Fijians, that individualism is loathed and discouraged and that fulfilment for ethnic Fijians is achieved predominantly from within their social and cultural order and their membership of the collectivist groups.

In collectivist cultures, personal goals and needs are subordinated to group needs and goals. Individual pursuits which conflict with group objectives are thought to be morally wrong.

The concept of collectivism is defined as a 'microscopic unit that has a potential capacity to act by drawing a set of microscopic normative bonds which tie members of a stratification category' (Etzioni quoted in Erez and Earley, 1993: 76). Collective paradigms:

are bound to one another through emotional predispositions, common interests and fate, as well as mutually agreed upon social practices. In such a relationship the temptation to defect and pursue self-interests over those of the collective are minimal. This point is particularly important since the degree of shared values is positively related to a collective's stability (Erez and Earley, 1993:76).

Deane's (1921) account of the collectivism of Fijian society remains in many respects valid today. According to Deane, Fijians are born into a social system, focused around the *mataqali* or clan which is equivalent to an enlarged family in which elders are viewed as fathers and juniors as children. Under this social structure, each Fijian contributes to the collective effort. For example, if a house had to be built, the clan did it, if a large canal had to be made, the members of the *mataqali*, or several *matagalas*, excavated it. 'And so with every other undertaking of importance' (Deane, 1921: 101-102). Because of their social structure and collective behaviour, Fijians came to have a 'predilection' for working in teams. Deane explained:

If he is set to work by himself he quickly loses heart, and becomes lackadaisical and without interest in his task. But his manner becomes immediately enthusiastic and energetic if he be allowed to throw in his lot with his fellows. The Rev. T. Williams has described very accurately the building of a house, and the shouting and leaping, the bustle and chatter, which continue without a moment's interruption until the work is finished. When the house is completed, the builders usually sit down in a company and give vent to their feeling of joy and satisfaction in one of their native chants accompanied by much rhythmic clapping of hands (Deane, 1921: 102).

Until the late fifties, Fijians involved in group effort very much displayed the behaviour as described by Deane. However, following the relaxation of native rules in the early 1960s, a substantial number of Fijians migrated to the urban areas in search of employment, opportunities in commercial farming and self-employment. This social development has weakened the group cohesion of Fijians, at least in urban areas.

Since collectivist societies such as the Japanese and the Chinese have succeeded in entrepreneurship, some commentators have suggested that Fijians could also succeed in collective capitalism, if not in individual capitalism. Avegalio and Golver, for example, state:

Fijian culture is best suited for collective capitalism, not individual capitalism. Collective capitalists focus on such ideals as resource sharing, group responsibility, and the importance of society over self. Individual initiative is encouraged only if it does not disrupt the balance and harmony of the group, community, corporation, or nation. There is no reason why the village fund cannot be used in a market economy ... Fijians do not have to give up their traditional culture to become conspicuous consumers (Avegalio and Golver, 2001: 6).

The participation of Fijians in 'collective' or 'communal' capitalism has generated its fair share of criticism. The consolidation of chiefly power arising from the accumulation of communal capitalism has been successfully used in Fiji (the 'Indian threat') and in Malaysia (the 'Chinese threat') to define and consolidate a separate Fijian identity and aggressively articulate ethno-nationalism (Ratuva, 2000).

Collective societies in Third World countries seem to exhibit similar characteristics. Saleh and Fufwoli (1980/81) describe the collective nature of Kenyan society which is similar to the Fijian society:

In Kenyan tribes nobody is an isolated individual. Rather, his uniqueness is a secondary fact about him. First, and foremost, he is several people's relative and several people's contemporary. His life is founded on these facts economically, socially and physically. In this system group activities are dominant, responsibility is shared and accountability is collective. This background makes individual responsibility hard to adjust to. It is not uncommon in work organizations to hear the complaint that you do not know where the responsibility lies. The same background may partly explain why it is common to see even in private organizations a group of people working on a simple job which could be done more efficiently by one person. It is perceived that a task is to be performed through co-operative efforts among individual members of an organization.

Because of the emphasis on collectivity, harmony and cooperation among group members tend to be emphasized more than individual function and responsibilities. In fact a precise definition of individual functions and responsibilities is deemed unnecessary, and may be even perceived as a source of disrupting the harmonious cooperative relationships among group members. In this system, the individual's loyalty to the group is more important than his competence (Saleh and Fufwoli, 1980/81: 320).

The communal spirit is so ingrained in Kenyan culture that it has led Dondo and Ngumo to bemoan that culture has now 'become a millstone around the necks of aspiring entrepreneurs and acts as an inhibitor of entrepreneurial development' (1998: 21).

The collectivist-individualistic dichotomy is a rather complex phenomenon. An individual in a society or a group may exhibit a mixture of individualistic and collectivist values. Such values have been described as 'horizontal-individualism' (H-I), 'vertical-individualism' (V-I), 'horizontal-collectivism' (H-C), and 'vertical-collectivism' (V-C).

In horizontal individualism, members exhibit a preference for living their own lives and in their own way, less concerned about the status of other members in the community or group. Vertical individualists constantly compare themselves with others (the 'keeping up with the Joneses' syndrome), a value prevalent in the upper and middle classes in Western democracies such as the USA. Horizontal collectivists generally remain in harmony with their in-groups, (family, tribe, co-worker and nation) without having any feeling of subordination to each other. Vertical collectivists are those who not only conform rigidly to the norms of their in-groups, but are also willing to self-sacrifice in the interest of group well-being and solidarity. Groups exhibiting such features include the residents of Israel's kibbutz dwellers and the high castes in India, such as the Brahmins and the Thakurs. In Fiji, Indo-Fijians could be regarded as horizontal individualists while ethnic Fijian as horizontal collectivists.

There is a widespread agreement that the social and economic development of a country is associated with entrepreneurship (Wittman, 1989; Skully, 1988). While some countries (South Korea and Malaysia, for example) have fostered entrepreneurship effectively, others (such as Indonesia, Pakistan, Kenya, Philippines) have made less progress. To understand this discrepancy researchers have shifted their investigative focus away from the search for a correlation between psychological traits and entrepreneurship, to exploring the role of culture as a determinant of entrepreneurship (El-Namaki, 1988; Petersen, 1988). However, a conclu-

sive study establishing a correlation between the two variables is yet to emerge because of confusion about terminologies, and disagreement about how to describe the relevant cultural variables. Despite this setback, a number of studies have shown that culture – particularly the individualistic-collectivist continuum – plays a substantial role either in fostering or hindering entrepreneurship.

Studies by McClelland (1961) and Triandis (1989) have shown that individualism is associated with high levels of gross national product. However, the emergence of economic giants such as Japan and China with their collectivist and Confucian values, indicates that both dimensions of culture foster economic growth. The Japanese economic ‘miracle’ has been attributed to the creation of dynamics of the group leading workers to give unstinting support to their leaders in the achievement of corporate goals (Nakane, 1973) and to socialization which ‘involves the development of a strong identification by each individual with the group, and a continuing sense of mutual obligation among its members in which the desires of the individual are subordinated to the needs and expectations of the large community’ (Welsch, 1998: 59). The growth of entrepreneurship in individualistic USA and collectivist Japan may also be attributable to a degree of harmonisation between Eastern and Western cultures (Latane, Williams and Harkins, 1979; Yamaguchi, Kuhlman and Sugimori, 1995).

As noted earlier, Hofstede’s (1980) studies based on work-related cultural values are often cited in the socio-cultural literature to explain entrepreneurship and organisational behaviour. He proposes demarcation of culture along four distinct dimensions.

The first dimension is *power distance*. This refers to the degree to which members of a society accept the right of others to exert authority over them. In a high power distance culture, subordinates expect direction from superiors, whereas in a low power culture, a participative style of management is preferred. Western countries tend to be low on power distance and high on individualism. On the other hand, South East Asian countries tend to be high on collectivism and high on power distance.

The second dimension is *uncertainty avoidance*. This refers to the extent to which individuals become tense as the result of lack of structure or uncertainty.

The third dimension of demarcation is based on *individualism and collectivism*. Collectivism refers to societies that have ‘moderate to low individualism.’ Such societies are close-knit and form a cohesive group from which individuals cannot detach themselves. Societies that exhibit

individualistic culture look after their own interests and consider their own goals and achievements to be more important. Hofstede (1980) noted that increased individualism leads to increased wealth, but also noted a negative relationship between individualism and economic growth (rate of change in GDP) among the 19 richest countries.

The fourth line of demarcation is whether cultures are *masculine and feminine*. Masculine societies stress material acquisition and success and assign different roles to men and women. Feminine cultures are characterised by interpersonal and interdependent relationships, and consideration for others.

However, Hofstede's view has been challenged. Yeh and Lawrence (1995), for example, argue that while certain cultural ingredients are essential for economic growth, a simple model linking culture with entrepreneurship is unsustainable. This view is strengthened by the economic development of many South East Asian countries. While culture may have a role in economic development, there are many other variables which are equally important. Political stability and market-oriented policies have been cited as more important to economic growth than culture. This argument has been supported by a World Bank study (1991) which found that the growth rate of GDP in forty-one developing countries was due to market and export oriented strategies. These countries had a 9.5% average growth rate compared with 4.1% rate for inward-oriented countries. China's 9.5% economic growth (during the 1980s) was the highest in the world and is attributed to Deng's market-oriented policies (Yeh and Lawrence, 1995) and not to Chinese culture. It may appear that fiscal and export-oriented policies are more important in the economic development of a country than 'cultural advantages'. Overall, culture may be best described as playing a catalytic role in the formation of entrepreneurship.

Of the 20 richest countries on the external purchasing power list between 1870-1988, 18 are from the West (Thurow, 1992: 204). Appendix IV shows the list of these 20 richest countries. Although these countries promote individualist values, there is no doubt that without favourable economic policies, these countries would not have achieved a higher economic growth. For example, the United Kingdom was the second richest country in the world in 1870, but by 1988 it had dropped to seventeenth position. Was this due to the fact that the British people were individualists in 1870, but changed to collectivist values in 1988? The answer is a clear 'no'. Similarly, individualistic New Zealand in 1870 was the seventh richest country, but by 1988 it became the poorest among those listed. New Zealand's economy subsequently achieved a turn around after protectionism was disregarded in the 1980s in favour of market-oriented

policies by successive governments.

Rather than a purely deterministic view of culture and entrepreneurship, what, therefore, the literature on entrepreneurship and culture shows is that collectivist cultures have impeded the growth of entrepreneurship in traditional societies. Conversely, individualism and prudent fiscal and economic policies have been the critical factors in entrepreneurial growth of the Western/industrialised societies.

It is too simplistic to explain entrepreneurship by using the individualism/collectivism continuum alone. Entrepreneurship is influenced by a wide range of micro and macro-environmental factors including 'individualism' and 'collectivism'. Democracy in the western sense, for example, is non-existent in Communist China which might suggest that 'individualism' would be non-existent in the country. Despite this, Communist China has been registering an annual economic growth rate of around 8% during the last decade. China has also considered taming growth from 9.1% in 2003 to 7% in 2004 (Fiji Times, 9 March 2004). On the other hand, Japan is currently the second richest nation in terms of Gross National Product, but is still suffering from an economic crisis that hit the country in 1989-90, when the 'bubble economy' of high land prices and high stock market prices collapsed' (BBC, 2001).

For Fiji, a lack of rapid growth of ethnic Fijian entrepreneurship can be explained by the influences of a collectivist culture. Fijians were denied exposure to entrepreneurship by the ruling authorities for over a hundred years. This led to a 'non-entrepreneurial mindset' and increased focus on cultural solidarity. With increased exposure to entrepreneurial opportunities and achievement of success, as well as of a changing cultural view whereby commercial success has become a valued attribute, future Fijian entrepreneurs are less likely to be influenced substantially by cultural rigidity. Nevertheless, the transition of ethnic Fijians from a 'non-entrepreneurial mindset' to an 'entrepreneurial mindset' will be challenging.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The enhanced interest in entrepreneurship in the post-war period led researchers to question why some people are more entrepreneurial than others, and how entrepreneurs may be distinguished from the rest of the population. After years of focusing exclusively on personality traits as the causal factor, researchers have shifted their focus to culture as a catalyst for economic growth. They have argued that culturally individualistic na-

tions or societies are more prone to entrepreneurial activities, while those that are culturally collectivist seem to achieve a lower level of entrepreneurship. This explanation was undermined by the recent experience of a number of collectivist societies, such as Hong Kong, Taiwan, China, and Malaysia, which have achieved tremendous economic growth.

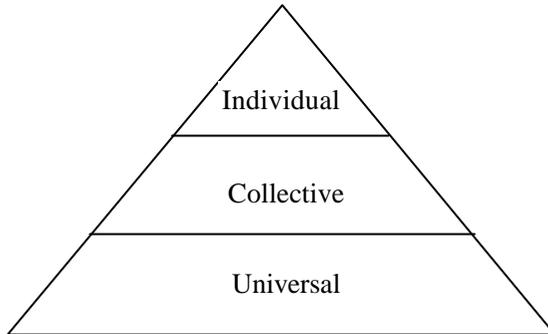
Whilst culture clearly influences entrepreneurship the survey done here shows that there are other important factors at work including political stability, liberal economic policies, a good infrastructure, and a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship. In Fiji, however, culture appears to have considerably stifled the growth of Fijian entrepreneurship. In contrast, entrepreneurship amongst Indo-Fijians and 'Others' has been considerably influenced by non-cultural factors. Generally though, a society that promotes an entrepreneurial culture has a better prospect of stimulating entrepreneurial disposition amongst its people.

### Appendix 1: Definitions of Culture

Contributor	Key Defining Characteristics
Taylor (1881)	that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.
Parsons and Sils (1951)	set rules or standards as such, abstracted, so to speak, from the actor who is committed to them by his own value-orientations and in whom they exist as need-dispositions to observe these rules. Thus a culture includes a set of standards. An individual's value orientation is his commitment to these standards.
Kluckhohn (1954)	Culture consists in patterned ways of thinking, feeling, and reacting, acquired and transmitted mainly by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artefacts. The essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e., historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values.
Hoebel (1960)	the integrated sum total of learned behavioural traits that are shared by members of a society.
Triandis (1972)	a subjective perception of the human-made part of the environment. The subjective aspects of culture include the categories of social stimuli, associations, beliefs, attitudes, norms and values, and roles that individuals share.
Rokeach (1973)	An enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end state of existence.
Hofstede (1980)	a set of mental programs that control an individual's responses in a given context.
Terpstra and David (1985)	learned, shared, compelling, interrelated set of symbols whose meaning provides a set of orientations for members of a society. These orientations, taken together, provide solutions to problems that all societies must solve if they are to remain viable.
Kamakura and Novak (1992)	A value refers to a single belief that transcends any particular object, in contrast to an attitude, which refers to beliefs regarding a specific object or situation. Values are more stable and occupy a more central position than attitudes, within a person's cognitive system. Therefore they are determinants of attitudes and behaviour and hence provide a more stable and inner-oriented understanding of consumers.
Schwartz (1996)	Desirable transitional goals, varying in importance, that serve as guiding principles in people's lives.

Sources: Braithwaite and Scott (1991); Kamakura and Novak (1992); Oishi, Schimmack, Diener and Suh (1998); Erez and Earley (1993); Fan (2000).

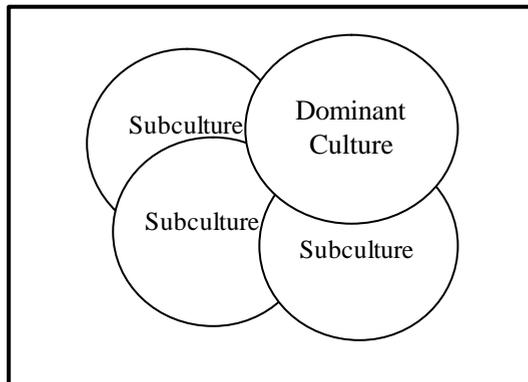
### Appendix II: Three levels of uniqueness in human mental programming



Source: Hofstede (1980, p. 16)

### Appendix III: Relationship between cultures and subcultures

Source: Adapted from Reisinger (1997: 40)



Various examples are evident within Asia. The Hindu culture pervades many aspects of the lives of Indonesians, whose lives are governed by Islamic culture. In Malaysia, the more tolerant Malay national culture seems to have influenced the dominant Islamic culture through international tourism and expatriate behaviour (Liebhold, *Time*, 2 October 2000).

## Appendix IV: The richest countries per capita in 1870 and 1988

1870	1988*	1988#
1 Australia	1 United Arab Emirates	1 Switzerland
2 United Kingdom	2 United States	2 Iceland
3 Belgium	3 Canada	3 Japan
4 Switzerland	4 Switzerland	4 Norway
5 Netherlands	5 Norway	5 Finland
6 United States	6 Luxembourg	6 Sweden
7 New Zealand	7 Australia	7 Denmark
8 Denmark	8 Iceland	8 United States
9 Canada	9 Kuwait	9 West Germany
10 France	10 Sweden	10 Canada
11 Argentina	11 West Germany	11 Luxembourg
12 Austria	12 Finland	12 France
13 Italy	13 Japan	13 Austria
14 Germany	14 France	14 United Arab Emirates
15 Spain	15 Denmark	15 Netherlands
16 Norway	16 United Kingdom	16 Belgium
17 Iceland	17 Italy	17 United Kingdom
18 Portugal	18 Belgium	18 Italy
19 Sweden	19 Netherlands	19 Australia
20 Chile	20 Austria	20 New Zealand

\*Based on internal purchasing power

# Based on external purchasing power

Source: Thurow (1992, p. 204).

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