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**THE INFLUENCE OF CULTURAL DIMENSION THEORY
IN ASIAN-AMERICAN CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE
WITH EMPHASIS ON INDIVIDUALISM AND
COLLECTIVISM**

BACHELOR THESIS

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Prohlašuji, že jsem práci vypracovala samostatně s použitím uvedené literatury a zdrojů informací.

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ABSTRACT

Maulerová, Adéla. University of West Bohemia. April 2021. The influence of cultural dimension theory in Asian-American literature with emphasis on individualism and collectivism.

Supervisor: William Bradley Vice, Ph.D.

The thesis focuses on the analysis of two pieces of literature *Waiting* written by Ha Jin and *The Refugees* written by Viet Thanh Nguyen. Both authors were born in East-Asian countries and both texts deal with the topic of the family and relationships and also how the pressure of Asian culture influences individuals and their decisions in different spheres of their lives. The object of the thesis is the analysis and comparison of the texts from an anthropological viewpoint using terms from cultural dimension theory. The analysis argues that cultural intelligence, along with a knowledge of cultural values, and other cultural aspects hidden under the tip of the iceberg (a reference to the ice-berg theory of culture), can show readers it is possible to see through a surface reading of fiction and unearth other, unseen layers buried in the narratives. Moreover, with such knowledge we are able to improve our interpersonal relationships, understand people from different cultures better and maybe even benefit from them. In a broader sense, the main focus of the thesis is on the notion of the family and its importance in East-Asian culture, in contrast with characteristics of people from individualist cultures. Nevertheless, the analysis of the characters and their behaviour, as well as their thinking process proves neither Asian nor Western culture is all one thing nor the other. Even individuals from collectivist cultures have their own desires which they seek to gratify.

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1. INTRODUCTION

To talk about how culture influences a person, we must first try to define culture. The anthropologist Edward T. Hall spent his career showing how culture intertwines every aspect of our lives. Apart from a person's individual personality, or how one chooses to express his or herself, culture constitutes the greater part of our institutional learning, economics, government, as well as transportation systems and architecture, religion, philosophy, and even our understanding of time (Hall, 1981).

China with other Asian countries and the USA are polar opposites regarding role and function of the individual versus his or her place in a community. This continuum in anthropological studies is known as individualism/collectivism. In two works of fiction, written by Asian-American authors, I will try to examine this dynamic, and focus on how the protagonists of these fiction are depicted in relation to their families as well as the tug of war these protagonists face between individual self-interest and family expectations. I will examine how the characters cope within their culture and the pressures created by their cultural background. *Waiting* by Ha Jin and *The Refugees* by Viet Thanh Nguyen are set in China and Vietnam respectively. In the latter book, I will focus solely on the story called "Fatherland".

Ha Jin was born in China in 1956, he was raised there and left for the United States in 1985. He served in the People's Liberation Army before moving to the US. Viet Thanh Nguyen was born in Vietnam but he was raised in America. Ha Jin and his *Waiting* won the National Book Award for Fiction in 1999 and PEN/Faulkner Award in 2000. In fact, *Waiting* has a truly suitable title. It portrays a story of a married military doctor, Lin Kong, who waits for 18 years to get married to his true love Manna Wu. The story is set at the time of Mao's Cultural Revolution. Even though the two work together and meet almost every day, it is almost impossible for them to even speak alone. The story does not fit into a Western notion of a typical romance in any sense. Despite the fact that the characters are from an East-Asian culture, they have their desires and inner wishes. Lin wants his true love and wishes to divorce his wife Shuyu who was chosen for him by his parents. Among other concerns, he was disappointed with his wife's appearance from the beginning, yet he obeyed his parents' wish and married her. Notwithstanding, just to spend another 18 years longing to divorce her. For instance, he is put off by his wife's bound feet (despite the fact that in the past, it used to be a symbol of beauty), "she looked so old, as if in her forties, her face wrinkled and her hands leathery" (Jin, 2000, p. 8). Shuyu's appearance is in contrast with her hardworking,

loving, loyal and caring character. On the other hand, when Lin met Manna Wu, she was a beautiful young energetic woman.

Viet Thanh Nguyen is recognized mostly for his debut novel *The Sympathizer* which is a highly praised piece of literary work. Not only was *The Sympathizer* awarded the Pulitzer Prize for fiction, but it also won some other prizes like the Andrew Carnegie Medal for Fiction or the Asian-Pacific American Award for Literature. *The Refugees*, his second piece of fiction is a collection of eight short stories. The stories focus on people and their lives in relation to their new adopted homeland and the country of origin. Each of the stories could be seen from various spheres of cultural dimension theory. I have chosen to closely analyse the last story called “Fatherland,” as it offers the best way to demonstrate the correlation between individualism/collectivism and complementary values. “Fatherland” depicts a story narrated by a Vietnamese girl Phuong. Among other things, the story follows her relationship with her half-sister, who in America is called Vivien, and has come to visit. Vivien’s real name is also Phuong, and this fact definitely puts tension between the sisters. Why would the protagonist’s father name his daughter the same name as a daughter he had with another?

Phuong's character, as well as Lin’s from *Waiting*, is full of desire. Desires that both characters feel to be selfish because of the demands of their families and communities.

Because of this, cultural intelligence can give us a window into Asian culture, especially as it is expressed through these immigrant authors. Certainly, for an ordinary reader who may not think deeply as to why an author writes what he writes or what motivates the characters, only open mind and personal preference for the genre might be sufficient to appreciate a book. Nevertheless, a whole new context of a story is presented to us when we look beyond the limitations of our own culture.

Constant work on improving our cultural intelligence allows us not only to understand other cultures better but also benefit from them. Whether it is used in cross-cultural interactions, that is, meeting people from different cultures, or for instance working with international business partners or on global projects, culture intelligence can help us be more understanding of the needs and concerns of others, in spite of coming from very far away, and speaking a language totally alien to our own. Even when reading a book, a fictional story, we may have a better understanding of what the author is trying to convey by sharpening our cultural intelligence. Moreover, in doing this we are able to step back and realize things which are normally beyond our initial thinking.

The aim of this thesis is to look through language itself and uncover the hidden meanings within those cultural forces Edward T. Hall describes this as being under the tip

of the cultural iceberg. In order to do that, I will analyse the literary works mentioned above using the cultural dimension theory to determine the overlaps between the narratives and the culture principals of their native countries. I will put special emphasis on the character's options in life and the decisions they make, especially regarding family relationships. I am going to focus on the connection between the characters' personal motives, and to what extent culture intertwines selfish desires with the demands of their greater communities or in what ways culture suppresses and even extinguishes individual desires.

2. CULTURE, CULTURAL VALUES AND CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE, CONFUCIANISM

CULTURE

Culture may seem as a very simple word, yet it is a rather complicated term, which can be looked upon from various points of view and various aspects of our lives. A sociological perspective will differ from anthropological, etc. Before stating precisely what culture is, we must distinguish between anthropological culture and high/low culture. As for high/low culture, various dictionaries and encyclopaedias present numerous definitions. According to a website *Boundless.com*, which provides content and resources for teaching needs, “High culture most commonly refers to the set of cultural products, mainly in the arts, held in the highest esteem by a culture”, whereas “Low culture is thought to encompass such things as gossip magazines, reality television, popular music, yellow journalism, escapist fiction, and camp” (Boundless, n.d.).

The focus of this thesis will be on the culture from the anthropological point of view. Yet again, even as regards to anthropological culture, the definitions vary. One of the most renowned experts in this area was an American anthropologist and cross-cultural researcher, Edward T. Hall. Introduction of the notion of High- and Low- context cultures, which will be important for my work and will be further discussed later in the chapter, belongs among one of his many contributions in his field of expertise, as well as his Cultural Iceberg Model. In his publication *Beyond Culture*, he notes that there are differences in detail as it comes to hold of the term of culture, however he explains that “... anthropologists do agree on three characteristics of culture: it is not innate, but learned; the various facets of culture are interrelated - you touch a culture in one place and everything else is affected; it is shared and in effect defines the boundaries of different groups” (Hall, 1981, p. 16).

Another eminent expert in this field was definitely professor Geert Hofstede, who was one of the leading representatives of intercultural research. Hofstede et al. (2010) compare the term culture to a mental software which he further describes as a narrow sense of culture. Referring to social anthropology, Hofstede et al. (2010) explain that: “Not only activities supposed to refine the mind are included, but also the ordinary and menial things in life: greeting, eating, showing or not showing feelings, keeping a certain physical distance from others, making love, and maintaining body hygiene” (p. 5).

Furthermore, Hofstede et al. offer another interesting thought, “Culture is always a collective phenomenon, because it is at least partly shared with people who live or lived within the same social environment, which is where it was learned. Culture consists of the

unwritten rules of the social game. It is the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others” (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 6). By studying culture and its aspects, we may be able to unfold a completely different story or see the text from an entirely unique point of view. Furthermore, by overcoming the boundaries of our own culture, we could be able to understand and relate to characters, let alone real human beings, more easily.

As stated earlier, culture penetrates into all aspects of our lives. I would like to mention Brooks Peterson, a founder of Across Cultures, Inc., an organization that helps professionals to achieve better interactions and improve their international work skills. In his book *Cultural Intelligence: A Guide to Working with People from Other Cultures*, he mentions the differences between countries. Also, he questions the dictionary definitions of cultures in the sense of not being concrete and usable for professionals. He provides his explanation of culture as, “Culture is the relatively stable set of inner values and beliefs generally held by groups of people in countries and regions and the noticeable impact those values and beliefs have on the peoples’ outward behaviours and environment” (Peterson, 2004, p. 17).

Given the provided definitions, my work will focus on anthropological culture with its values and principles which can enhance the reader's view of the selected texts.

CULTURAL VALUES AND CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE

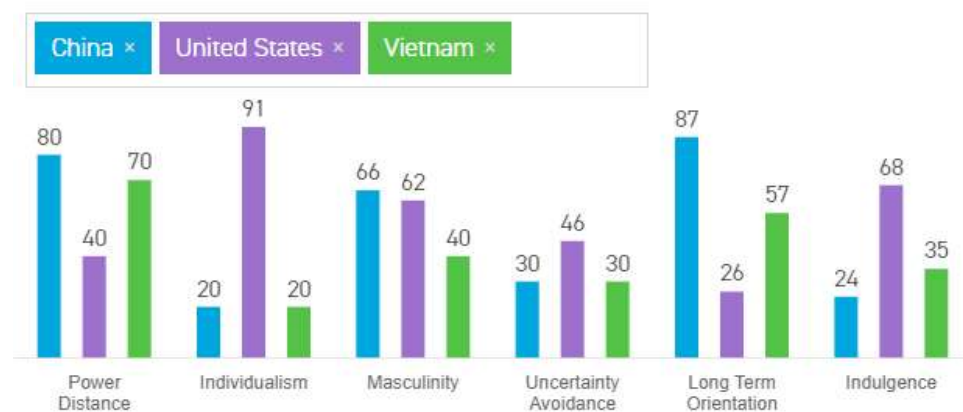
Culture itself has a number of elements, such as history, language or religion. An iceberg is often used as an analogy to culture. Although this metaphor is often contested as it is not dynamic, I find its simplicity useful. An iceberg has two parts - one can be seen - the tip of the iceberg, and the much larger part that cannot be seen - the under the water part. Anything we can perceive with our senses, is the tip of the iceberg; for instance language, gestures, architecture, food, population, etc. However, the majority of the important aspects of culture is found in the under-water part. This would include opinions, attitudes, philosophies or cultural values (Peterson, 2004).

By decoding and learning about cultural values, we should be able to know how to behave in certain situations or maybe, related to literature, why our favourite character makes such a decision or reacts how he/she reacts. At the same time an adequate reaction should come from us. In the publication *Communication Between Cultures*, Samovar et al. (2010) use the term “guidelines” as a key word regarding cultural values. These guidelines were firstly presented by Geert Hofstede in the 1970's in his Cultural Dimension Theory.

Consequently, in his book *Culture's Consequences*, published in 1980, Hofstede introduced five main dimensions (cultural values) - individualism/collectivism, uncertainty avoidance (high and low-uncertainty avoidance), power distance (high and low power distance), masculinity/femininity and long- and short-term orientation. These values are considered to be the core of the culture spectrum and are internalized early in life. Although cultures can be categorized, and tend to incline to the either end of the dimension scale, none of the cultures is either-or. However, as Peterson (2004) clarifies, "National culture groups tend to operate with a set of common values" (p. 23). Thus, by analysing a large number of people, it is possible to make generalizations about the dimensions of specific culture.

In the figure 1 below, a clear comparison of China, the USA and Vietnam can be observed. The figure shows values as well as the score of the individual countries.

Figure 1 – Country comparison



(Country comparison, 2020)

Along with Hofstede's cultural values, other means of considering cultural similarities and differences were introduced by Edward T. Hall. He invented the concept of context which is related to communication. According to Hall (1981), context is "the information that surrounds an event; it is inextricably bound up with the meaning of the event" (p. 9). He classifies cultures as being either high- or low-context. "A high-context (HC) communication or message is one in which most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message. A low-context (LC) communication is just the opposite; i.e., the mass of the information is vested in the explicit code" (Hall, 1981, p. 91).

It is clear that the USA stands on the low-context end of scale, whereas China and

Vietnam are on the high-context end of scale. Given the stated previously, in high-context cultures the emphasis is on how you say something rather than what you say. On the contrary, the specific and explicit instructions are needed in low-context cultures. If we look at our primary texts, in neither of them will we find a clear declaration of love or affection. If there is anything like it, it is subtle. Moreover, the behaviour and acts of the characters speak for them. Vivien's character, as a representative of an individualist culture, is a great example of low-context attitude. She speaks clearly, without hesitation, sometimes she even exaggerates and her speech is descriptive, usually richer than Phuong's. Vietnamese Phuong is on the other hand reserved, keeps many of her thoughts to herself and acts as it is expected of her.

Since *Waiting* is a literary work set in China and "Fatherland" in Vietnam, which contrasts sharply with American individualism (see the figure 1 above), individualism/collectivism needs to be closely explored. As the name may suggest, collectivist societies are interested in the concerns of the group. Social harmony is the collective goal. However, in individualist societies the interest of the individual dominates and thus privacy is valued and respected more than in collectivist cultures. Hofstede et al. (2010) offer the terms in-group and out-group and explains them as follows, "In-group refers to what we intuitively feel to be "we," while out-group refers to "they" (p. 16). Since humans are social individuals, they need to classify others in either group.

The first group we ever encounter is always our family. In collectivist countries, children are usually raised, or at least are in a quite close contact with the extended family. In contrast to that, in individualist countries, children live only with their parents, other relatives are seen as peripheral to the core family. Also, the issue of one-parent families is rather a serious matter there. China is the most collectivist country, while the USA is considered to be the most individualist country in the world. All aspects of life are affected, for instance, we can mention family, school or work.

It is not common in collectivist families for children to speak up and share personal opinions. Moreover, there are no personal opinions, since opinions are fixed by the group (Hofstede et al., 2010). This can be demonstrated on Nguyen's "Fatherland" when Vivien asks her father, without hesitation, why he gave his second set of children the same names. Phuong has never asked that question.

The power distance goes hand in hand with individualism and collectivism. David Livermore explains in his publication *Leading with Cultural Intelligence: The New Secret to Success* that, "Power distance is the extent to which differences in power and status are

expected and accepted. It reveals where the power lies and how it's structured" (p. 100). For that, in low power distance societies, people do not just accept the views of superior, they are willing to question them. On the contrary, in high power distance societies, people accept the views and abide by them. According to Livermore (2010), societies that achieve a high score on the power distance index, tend to score low on the individualism index and vice versa. The topic of divorce, something which is certainly a personal matter for Western culture, can be seen in Ha Jin's *Waiting* as a matter for which Lin has to have a letter of recommendation provided from his superiors in the army hospital.

Short- and long-term orientation deserves more detailed explanation as well. Another term, which is used by Livermore (2010), is clock time (short-term oriented) versus event time (long-term oriented) dimension. Asian countries emphasize the priority of social relationships hence they lean towards the long-term orientation value. On the contrary, Western societies put emphasis on punctuality and efficiency, therefore they have a lower score in long-term orientation index. In other words, short-term oriented countries are concerned with short-term results and pursue quick satisfaction of their needs. On the other hand, long-term oriented countries value a strong work ethic and honour respect for status differences (Samovar et al., 2010). In Ha Jin's *Waiting*, Manna Wu waited 18 years for Lin to get the divorce. While they were somehow considered a couple, they never broke any rules while Lin was still married. They never even sought physical gratification. It is not probable that in Western culture someone would wait for their love that long.

One more value or dimension has yet to be explained in detail, and that is the indulgence. This value was introduced as the sixth dimension in 2010 and Hofstede et al. (2010) define indulgence as the degree to which people control their longing and impulses. Also, they use terms restrain cultures for those, which are at the lower score, such as Vietnam or China and indulgent cultures which have higher score on the scale of this value, for instance the USA. Simply put, we could say that the score of indulgence tells us how people in the particular culture enjoy their life. This value is related to happiness, how people spend their free time as well as how they approach gratification of their desires in any sense of that word. For instance, in "Fatherland" Phuong is given a set of lace lingerie. Her first reaction is disapproving, describing them as: "They're scandalous!" (Nguyen, 2018, p. 195). Regardless of her initial thoughts, she tries them on and while looking in the mirror, she studies herself: "The touch of lace against her skin and the glimpses of her nearly nude body, draped so provocatively, were thrilling" (Nguyen, 2018, p. 195). This situation implies that

culture restrains her from feeling sexy or desirable, but there is certainly the spark of desire in Phuong's imagination.

The last two dimensions, according to Hofstede's terminology, are masculinity and uncertainty avoidance. Gender has an important role in culture as well. Masculinity, as a culture value, represents how gender is perceived in culture. Hofstede et al. (2010) explain that masculine culture is the one where we can find clear differences between gender roles, meaning men should be tough, focused on material stuff etc., while women are to be sensitive and more modest. On the other hand, in feminine societies the distinction between the genders is not that strict and both genders should have the qualities of tenderness or modesty. Lastly, uncertainty avoidance represents how people of the certain culture deal with the uncertain or unknown situations (Hofstede et al., 2010). Interestingly, in relation to the family matters and children, uncertainty avoidance could for example cover different points of view on what is dirty/clean or safe/dangerous for the children.

Although English is considered to be a global language, or in other words lingua franca, it does not necessarily mean that people will always understand one another using it. As mentioned earlier, there are aspects of culture which one cannot grasp right away. To enhance the intercultural interactions, whether it is in multinational companies or while travelling, or even when you want to understand the hidden message in books, it is crucial to work with cultural intelligence (CQ). The foremost expert on cultural intelligence, David Livermore (2010) emphasises the ability of the individual to observe culture and adapt appropriately. He explains cultural intelligence (CQ) as, "the capability to function effectively across national, ethnic, and organizational cultures" (Livermore, 2010, p. 24).

While working on our CQ, we are allowing ourselves not only to extend our horizons as for communication with people from different cultures goes, but higher CQ also provides us with the opportunity of seeing a piece of literature, or any other art for that matter, in a different light. For instance, at first glance Ha Jin's *Waiting* may seem as a typical romance especially for someone from Western culture, but as it will be analysed in Chapters 2 and 3, a lot more will be unearthed.

CONFUCIANISM

Apart from Hofstede's cultural dimensions, a further element must be taken into account - religion. East-Asian cultures, Chinese culture in particular, was shaped based on the rules and teaching of Confucianism. In the book *Communication Between Cultures*, Samovar et al. specify that Confucianism is not in fact a religion, but rather a philosophy

formed around the teachings of Confucius whose main goal, simply said, was to preserve social harmony in all interpersonal relationships (2010). They also present us with a remarkable cultural insight:

Confucianism teaches that the proper and suitable foundation for society is based on respect for human dignity. That respect stresses the proper hierarchy in social relationships among family members, community, and superiors. Confucius set forth a series of ideals that structured much of his thought about these relationships. An understanding of some of these teachings will help you appreciate Asian perception and interaction (Samovar et al., 2010, pp 147, 148).

The hierarchy in social relationships especially among family members will be explained in detail later in my work.

3. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE FAMILY

Family is of great importance in Asian cultures. Proof of that can be found in the quote credited to Confucius “The strength of a nation derives from the integrity of the home”. Livermore (2010) explains that collectivist societies abide by *guanxi*, which means to always have in mind what is best for the group. In addition, as far as power distance is concerned, respect for parents and elders is highly valued, if not the most valued virtue in high-power distance cultures. For this reason, there is a certain level of formality present to some extent between children and parents, not to say grandparents; even though the children have control over their own lives. On the contrary, in low power distance societies, independence is the core virtue or a component and every member of the family should be able to make their own way in the world. In other words, advice may be appreciated, however the final decision is on the individual, not the elders.

NOTION OF THE FAMILY

In the publication *Tradiční Rodina v Číně*, which was written by the students of Masarykova univerzita, supervised by doc. Olivová, the authors explain the hierarchy of relationships in a traditional Chinese society. Five most crucial relationships are presented, out of which three of them concern family. The hierarchy in the family is strictly given by age, gender and generation. The most valuable relationship is father – child. Consequently, the son is obedient to his parents, therefore his parents’ wishes and needs are greater than his wife’s. Secondly, there is the husband – wife relationship and thirdly is brother – brother relationship (Dosedlová et al., 2019). Horst J. Helle, a German sociologist, highlights in his work *China: Promise or Threat*, that because of all duties family members have in China (family care, financial support, etc.), they are more dependent on each other rather than on the government. While in Western culture, where the reliance on the family is not so strong, the need of government support is increasing (Helle, 2017). Subsequently, he pinpoints the fact, that in West elder members of the family can live in retirement homes, small children can visit nursery school and when people are sick, the hospital staff will take care of them, so that the young couples are able to use the time, money and personal freedom to their liking (Helle, 2017). Yet, it does not mean that Western young couples do not have some obligation to their family, it is the difference in the means they have that can be more helpful to them.

Certainly, strong family bonds are the base of a Chinese society. In the article *High-Versus Low-Context Culture: A Comparison of Chinese, Korean, and American Cultures*, Kim et. al. (1998) state that family attachment is then transferred to friends or co-workers,

which gradually extends into communities and culture in general. As for the marriage, we must realize that love is not the most important factor. Due to the premise of a high-context culture, the approval of the parents is crucial. Furthermore, the wife is expected to live with her husband and his family, as well as to take care of her husband's parents, not to say the property or piece of land they have (Helle, 2017). In *Waiting*, Bensheng defends his sister, although rather emotionally, by saying that: "It's unfair for Lin Kong to do this to her. She has lived with the Kongs for more than twenty years, serving them like a dumb beast of burden. She looked after his sick mother until the old woman died. Then his father fell ill, and for three years she took care of the old man so well that he never had a single bed sore" (Jin, 2000, p. 12).

Xiao, or filial piety, is a teaching which comes from Confucianism and it is about children's devotion and obedience towards their parents (Dosedlová et al., 2019). In other words, to suppress one's desire in order to please their parents. Example can be found in Jin's *Waiting* when Lin let his parents find him a wife, "Out of filial duty, Lin agreed to let his parents find a wife for him" (Jin, 2000, p. 8). Also, this filial duty towards his parents as well as towards his own wife and daughter was what kept him questioning his own desires and love for Mana Wu. On the other hand, Lin's desires are real and he has somewhat individualistic thinking when he stresses several times that, "This is my personal matter," (Jin, 2000, p. 128).

From the point of view of the high vs. low context, with the devotion and obedience towards the parents, comes then a commitment (Kim et. al., 1998). A promise which was made is to be kept due to strong family bonds and all connected together, it lets us understand Lin's constant struggle.

Not only the concept of harmony can be seen in collectivist families. Another crucial notion could be shame and face. A person who disobeys the group's rules will feel ashamed and also loses their face, meaning will be humiliated (Hofstede et al., 2010). Moreover, the humiliation befalls on the whole family. Lin's brother Ren opposes him by saying, "Maybe not. A divorce will affect everybody in our family. Kids in my village have already started calling your nephews names, saying, 'Your uncle has two wives,' or, 'Your uncle is a womanizer.' How can you say a divorce is just your own affair?" (Jin, 2000, p. 128).

When having this discussion, Lin really wants to get through the divorce and his selfish and not so collectivist part outweighs. He does not understand the connection between his divorce and the shame his nephews might feel: "How far-fetched their ideas can be. What does my marriage have to do with my nephews' lives? Why should the boys feel ashamed

of me?” (Jin, 2000, p. 128). Throughout the book, Lin fights with his inner thoughts of love he shares with Manna Wu, and the duty he has towards his parents and his family. Lin’s character development is interesting since it seems he is running in circles. His whole life is in constant doubt. Lin first questions whether or not to get a divorce, when he finally gets it, again he’s questioning whether it was out of true love, not to say if the love is still there, or it was a mistake.

It is important to realize that even though China is still considered to be the most collectivist country, globalization has its effect there, too. Studies have been carried out to map how much, and in which areas globalization influences the collectivism of China. According to a study called *Collectivism’s Individualism: Value Preference, Personal Control, and the Desire for Freedom among Chinese in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Singapore* conducted by S. Lau (1992), “Chinese are not necessarily more collectivistic; they have to behave like this as it is a fact of life in a collective society. Chinese are individualistic and collectivistic. They have individualistic wishes, and collectivism is a means to fulfil those wishes in a collective society“ (p. 366).

DUALITY OF THE FAMILIES – WAITING

Both books somehow deal with a divorce that terminates an old family and creates a new one. The divorce rate in Asian countries is noticeably low and marriage is considered as a rather pragmatic arrangement rather than a romantic or moral arrangement. Nevertheless, even when considering a divorce, the “former” family must be taken care of as much as the current family--this is because of the interdependence of the family members.

Before we take a closer look at the main protagonist of the book *Waiting*, it is necessary to mention that culture is not the only factor that plays an immense role here, but also the time setting of the story is crucial. The story begins in 1963 and spans over a twenty-year period while the Chinese culture experiences much political change. One of the crucial moments was the rise and fall of Red Guards, students dedicated to Mao, who were part of the Cultural Revolution - a mass political movement. It was a very difficult time for scholars, teachers and anyone who would prioritize intellect over the revolution, because the movement was radical, violent and anti-intellectual (Kerr, 2013). The Red Guards are even mentioned in *Waiting* regarding the purge of the hospital library: “The two dozen novels and plays it had once owned had been surrendered to the bonfires built by the Red Guards before the city hall two months ago” (Jin, 2000, p. 33).

Lin Kong is a married man, in his forties who works as a doctor in an army hospital in Muji City. Nevertheless, his wife and daughter live in the countryside or a rural part of China. The contrast between the city and the countryside is one of the major themes of the book. Lin's goal is to divorce his wife in order to get married to his girlfriend from the hospital - Manna Wu. His wife – Shuyu - refuses to divorce him for seventeen long years, however, she must accept the divorce after the eighteenth year of separation because an officer can divorce his wife without her consent according to army regulations. Nevertheless, divorces were not a common thing, “Divorces were rare in the county. The court would handle about a dozen cases a year, and only two or three would end in a divorce. Most of the time the court tried to help the couples resolve their marital problems and get them back together” (Jin, 2000, p. 10).

As I have already declared, culture is not either collectivist or individualist. Thus, Lin is a mixture of both, neither one thing or the other. On one hand Lin is selfish for wanting to put away his wife of a certain age for a younger woman. Even in Lin's character, there is a proof that Lin highly values his parents and honours their decision, because the son's loyalty is deeply rooted in Confucianism. The son is expected to obey and honour his parents' decisions and wishes. Since Lin's mother was ill and his father had to work in the fields, Lin was facing the inevitable because “His father wanted Lin to get married soon so that his bride could look after his mother. Out of filial duty, Lin agreed to let his parents find a wife for him” (Jin, 2000, p. 8).

As Hofstede et al. (2010) introduce the terms of “we” groups (in-groups) and “they” groups, Lin's decision may be based on the idea that: “The “we” group (in-group) is the major source of one's identity and the only secure protection one has against the hardships of life” (p. 91). Lin may not love his wife, but always makes sure to take care of her and his daughter by sending them money every month. Sharing resources is a crucial aspect of a collectivist family. Lin's deeds also support the idea of marriage often being a practical arrangement, because romantic feelings are not involved, however in a way he tries to provide them with a somewhat decent life. Respect is more important than love.

Also, as for marriage, in collectivist societies, personal preferences and opinions are not as important as the assessment of the family, since the marriage itself is more an agreement between families instead of demonstration and confirmation of couples' love. Hofstede et al. (2010) state it clearly by saying, “The bride and groom may have little say in the choice of a partner” (p. 112). Thus, unfortunately there was no way out of the marriage for Lin who wanted a marriage based on love and a presentable wife.

The reason why the divorce stretches over 18 years, apart from law regulations, might be because of the aspect of loyalty. Lin struggles with his feelings towards his family. Not being in love with his wife is not a good enough reason for divorce. More so, because Shuyu was such a good wife and according to tradition took care of his mother, later on his father and their house. Nonetheless, despite Lin's devotion to his parents and his family, he may have been influenced by his leaving the village for high school in a city, later on followed by studies at medical school, yet again in a city. Due to this fact, he is able to distinguish the differences between the city and village mentality which can be seen in various parts of the book, for instance when Lin visited his parents' grave and was pondering about bringing up the divorce for the first time, "It would make no sense to anybody in the countryside if Lin said he wanted to divorce his wife because he didn't love her. He had to find a real fault in her, which he couldn't" (Jin, 2000, p. 94). However, the very same community, on the contrary, defends the traditional mentality as in this excerpt, "A woman shouldn't be allowed to divorce either, or else there'll be disorder everywhere. The order of the world is rooted in every family, as Confucius said" (Jin, 2000, p. 123).

Nevertheless, Lin indeed wants to get divorced, think of him and somehow put himself first and think as "I", rather than "we", "He felt that the family didn't depend on him anymore and that it was time to move along with his own life. For better or worse, he should disentangle himself from this loveless marriage" (Jin, 2000, p. 9). Lin wants to experience the love and live a full life with a partner he deeply cares about. Interestingly, this kind of thinking is only possible after the death of his parents. Nevertheless, he fights within himself, perhaps due to the very core belief which Hofstede et al. (2010) point out as, "...one owes lifelong loyalty to one's in-group, and breaking this loyalty is one of the worst things a person can do" (p. 91). To support this idea of his inner battle, here is how he explains to Manna what happened on one of the many occasions he was scheduled to divorce his wife:

But to her dismay, he went on to describe how he hadn't been able to divorce his wife this summer, how he couldn't abandon his daughter who was still so young and had hung on his neck all the time calling him papa, how he had tried to broach the topic with Shuyu but every time his courage had failed him, how he couldn't find any solid reason with which to persuade the local court to grant him a divorce, how the villagers viewed this matter differently from people in the city, how sorry he felt for Manna, who deserved a better man than himself. In short, he was hopeless and couldn't do a thing, at least for the time being (Jin, 2000, p. 98).

Needless to say, that after the divorce was finalized, Lin still cared for his family. His daughter and ex-wife both moved to the city. A further example of the importance of the family could surely be Shuyu's (ex-wife) thinking of Lin's and Manna's growing family. She is the character who throughout the whole book always recognizes loyalty, and unconditional priority of the family, "Hua sometimes came on Sundays. If Manna was at home, she would stay only for a short while. She told her father that Shuyu was very pleased to hear about Manna's pregnancy, because this meant their family would be larger" (Jin, 2000, p. 256).

DUALITY OF THE FAMILIES – FATHERLAND

Similarly, Viet Thanh Nguyen's short story "Fatherland" involves a storyline concerning a divorce, yet from a different perspective. Unlike in *Waiting*, where the duality of the family was evidently within one culture, in "Fatherland", the duality stretches over two cultures. Emphasis being here on the character of Vivien, who was raised by her mother and stepfather in the USA and her sister Phuong, raised in Vietnam. Unlike Lin in *Waiting*, Phuong's father Mr. Ly was not hiding his mistress and what is more, the mistress demanded money. Therefore, Vivien's mother escaped the country with her three children. Time setting of the story is several years after the Vietnamese war.

Interestingly, the emphasis on wellbeing of both sides of the family and the responsibility which Lin felt towards his "first" family is not that clear here. Although Mr. Ly is very proud of his children's success, he did not contribute to it. Importance of the family is more focused on success as: "Evidence of their good fortune was written in the terse letters sent home annually by the mother of Phuong's namesake, the first Mrs. Ly, who enumerated each of her children's accomplishments, height, and weight in bullet points" (Nguyen, 2018, p. 181). This confirms that the mother has more of individualist thinking rather than collectivist as she emphasises the success and achievement. Samovar et al. (2010) explain that in individualist cultures, accomplishment of the individual is rewarded. Simultaneously, Mr. Ly is proud of his children because of their achievements, maybe especially because it brings the family more respect altogether.

For reasons discussed further in the thesis, Mr. Ly gave the same names to children he had with his second wife (they also had 3 children) as to his first-born children. That is to explain that Vivien's original name was Phuong. It is intriguing and clever of the writer, because I see Vivien (Phuong) and Phuong (her younger sister) as counterparts and to some extent representatives of individualist and collectivist cultures as well as high/low context

cultures. These cultural dimensions are beyond doubt obvious especially owing to the characters above. Also, the same names could imply Mr. Ly's regrets of the divorce, moreover siring other children and desire of keeping his family. Alternatively, in his mind it could have eased his conscience. Regardless, the fact that his "new" wife agreed with the names, must be a sign of the supremacy of male gender in the concerned culture.

By not using her original name, Vivien shatters the traditions which are so important for long-term oriented cultures such as Vietnamese. In addition, the community plays a significant role as well. Moreover, by doing so, Vivien emphasises her "inner self", her true identity. She accentuates this feature by being resolute and straightforward. When inviting her family to a restaurant, where mainly tourists eat, she says: "Price aside, this is a good restaurant," (Nguyen, 2018, p. 184). Vivien's authoritativeness is unusual for Vietnamese culture to say the least.

Nonetheless, the respect and interpersonal relationships within the family are conveyed by the character of Phuong. She is 23 years old and still is deeply concerned with what her parents would think, yet at the same time she cannot help but to have her own desires. When Vivian gives her a set of Victoria's Secret lingerie, she says: "My mother and father would never let me wear these" (Nguyen, 2018, p. 195). However, she is fascinated and intrigued by her sister's life in the States and dreams of being independent. In spite of being fascinated and intrigued by her sister's life in the States, her dreams of being independent and her secret self and family affiliation is apparent. For illustration, from the conversation between Phuong and Vivien it is apparent where Phuong's thoughts are as follows, "What's the first thing you'll do in Chicago? Call your mother?" "Take a long drive by myself. I miss my car" (Nguyen, 2018, p. 184). For Phuong, or anyone else from a collectivistic culture for that matter, would probably be difficult to be longer without the family. On the contrary, Vivien feels the need to gratify her desire of freedom first. She might be overwhelmed by the constant presence of the whole family.

4. CHARACTERS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS

This chapter will focus on particular relationships between the individual characters and their attitudes toward life and life choices. Still, the family and how family is perceived in the culture will be significant. We are born into a certain culture, a society, thus our behaviour, thoughts and decisions are likely to be greatly influenced by it. In collectivist cultures, the means for reaching social harmony are the hierarchy, respect of the elders (here we could also think of Veneration of the dead), avoiding conflicts and the importance of the relationships (Dosedlová et al., 2019). What is more, the connection to Confucianism is deeply rooted in the history of Asian cultures and Confucianism has affected these cultures immensely.

Confucius was born in 551 B.C. so we have to have in mind that his teachings were influenced by that time (especially in regards to battles or war). Moreover, most of the written forms of the teachings were written by Confucius's students and followers. Undoubtedly, Confucianism is valid even nowadays and still is the most powerful movement in China. Nevertheless, the political party uses it (and has been) to secure its socialistic ideology (Helle, 2017).

FATHER/DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIP

Parents play a crucial role in the life of every individual. The study called *Tiger Mother: Popular and Psychological Scientific Perspectives on Asian Culture and Parenting*, deals with the topic of specific parenting styles in East-Asian cultures. While in Western culture, parents want their children's academic success, they also pay attention to their self-esteem, independence and socialization. Asian parents put emphasis on academic success only, relying on the obedience and respect for elders rooted in their collectivistic culture. (Lui & Rollock, 2013). Another study called *'Tiger Mom, Panda Dad': A Study of Contemporary Chinese Parenting Profiles* (2017) presents terms like "stern father" and "compassionate mother" which traditionally characterize the differences between the parents.

"Stern father" being the plenipotentiary of the house, whose usually distant and does not have to show the feeling of love, is the one who makes the decisions regarding children and controls the family. As opposed to "stern father", there is the "compassionate mother" who is caring and loving, obedient to her husband and takes care of the household as well as the children's day to day needs (Xie & Li, 2017). Lately, a term "Tiger parenting" or "Tiger mother" has been used in terms of Asian parenting styles, especially in East, South and

Southeast Asia. The mothers are becoming the ones who put the pressure on the children and demand great accomplishments of them.

In both works – Jin’s *Waiting* and Nguyen’s “Fatherland,” we encounter fathers, and although the books show a Chinese and a Vietnamese family, thus collectivist and high context families, the fathers are anything but the same. The fathers might want the same but have different measures to pursue it.

In “Fatherland,” Mr. Ly is the master of the house, although it seems to be only a formal position. His daughters do not love him and, what is worse, do not respect him. Phuong realizes it during her sister Vivian’s visit. She thinks of her family and of his father, “None was drawn more clearly than her father, whom she pitied and, even worse, did not respect. If he were only an adulterer and a playboy, then there would be cause for resentment, but he was in decline, a failure without even the glamour of decadence and bad behaviour” (Nguyen, 2018, p. 197).

Mr. Ly was not coping well with what life had prepared for him. From a successful man who owned a shoe factory, he became someone who served several years in labour camp and was relocated to a New Economic Zone (which were special zones with poor conditions where people were relocated from Saigon). While he was serving his years, his wife left for America because his mistress demanded money. Needless to say, up until then, she was oblivious to him having mistress. When he came back, he married his mistress and became a tour guide.

As I have already mentioned earlier in my work, Mr. Ly gave his “other set of children” the same names as his first three children. Interestingly, from both marriages, he had one daughter and two sons. Out of respect, Phuong never asked him why he did so. I believe that because of the fact that Vivian comes from an individualistic culture, she did not have the problem with asking. His answer was: “If you hadn’t come back to see me, I would have understood. But I knew you would come back to see the one I named after you” (Nguyen, 2018, p. 190). It is both melancholic and manipulative. Later his daughter Phuong finds him pitiful and has no respect for him.

Phuong’s reserved attitude and unwillingness to ask such questions, albeit she was curious about it, might also be explained by not wanting to confront her father. In high context cultures, social harmony is superior to ‘self’. On the contrary, Vivien from low context society does not see it as an offence or an unpleasant confrontation. According to Hall (1981), people from low context cultures are inclined to confront other people while

expressing or defending themselves. In addition, low context cultures emphasise clear and direct communication (Livermore, 2010).

Lin, despite the fact that he wanted to divorce Shuyu, had always had in mind her well-being as well as his daughter's (Hua). Not only did he want to support them financially, he also arranged them living in the city and a better job for his daughter. Again, there is a commitment coming from high context culture. His relationship with his daughter had its ups and downs but eventually, they had a loving relationship. Furthermore, not once did his daughter find him pitiful.

Hua, as a small child, loved her father, but as she was growing up and he was not present, she started to take to her uncle. It is understandable since she was growing up in the extended family and certain family members were around. More so when she knew about the divorce. Lin observed the change in her behaviour, "He was unhappy that his daughter seemed somewhat estranged from him now. When she was a baby girl, she had been very attached to him and they had often played together whenever he came home. ... Now she seldom said an unnecessary word to him, and at most she would give him a thin smile" (Jin, 2000, p. 6). This escalated and Hua rarely spoke to Lin. She was also very attached to her mother so seeing her being hurt by her father made her resent him or maybe even hate him at times. However, if she had any of these feelings, she kept them to herself and always did what she was told and never had she spoken against her father. Sometimes, in individualistic cultures, when expressing one's opinion or disapproval, children can say mean things to their parents.

When the divorce was finalized, Hua was a grown-up girl, a woman. Her attitude changed and when her father arranged her a job, she realized that, "In her heart she was grateful to her father, but she never said a word about it" (Jin, 2000, p. 236). Hua did not openly share any feelings with her father. In general, showing emotions or sharing feelings between fathers and their children can be rarely seen in both books. Both sides keep them to themselves as a result of high context culture which stresses the roles and unspoken understanding while using indirect communication (Livermore, 2010).

Mr. Ly is a great example of a competitive parent who loves or values his children based on their successes. He does not support the love between siblings, he selfishly tracks the achievements, makes especially the second set of children question themselves and are less blessed. Furthermore, he compares Phuong with her sister Vivien, which naturally leads to jealousy. Children's attitude shows the differences between American Vivien and Vietnamese Phuong. There is no evidence of Mr. Ly's affection or pride towards his

Vietnamese children, but as for his American children, “Mr. Ly had laminated each of the photographs to protect them from humidity and fingerprints, keeping them neatly stacked on a side table by the couch in the living room” (Nguyen, 2018, p. 182). Why is that? He used to be a successful, independent man, having his American children climbing up the ladder of success does not make him proud of the children, but it makes him proud of himself. He may have lost his company and may have suffered a great deal in the labour camp, but he still has his children. He is their father thus their success is his success. Little does he know that all of it is fake.

Vivien represents the image of a perfect daughter. She is pretending to be a young, unmarried doctor who came to visit her father. Even so, that he, although he is a tourist guide, unconditionally and without questions follows her plan to visit different sights. Phuong describes it as: “A weevil of envy resurfaced nearly every day of Vivien’s visit, for her father was behaving completely unlike himself, as if he were also competing at a job, in this case to win Vivien’s approval. Without question or criticism, he followed Vivien’s plan for visiting temples.....” (Nguyen, 2018, p. 187).

Mr. Ly seems like a prideful, pitiful character who lives in his own world without any feelings. Unlike Mr. Ly, Lin often thinks of love towards his children (Hua in particular). Also, not necessarily love, but gratitude and even though they are divorced with Shuyu, there is still the sense of family which is not only given by the culture.

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The relationships between siblings, as well as the other relationships in the family, ought to be in harmony in a traditional collectivist (especially Chinese) family. In *Waiting*, Hua, as Lin’s daughter, was also obedient to her father. Later in the book, she came to the city, although it may have been because of her mother. Nevertheless, she was at first torn between her father and her uncle. Eventually, she moved to the city and when Lin’s and Manna’s twins were born, she visited them at the weekend and helped them with housework and the babies. Although the twins were her half-brothers, she was always very affectionate.

She liked feeding them with only one nursing bottle, which made them compete to suck it and crow with pleasure. They would laugh and put out their fat little hands whenever she teased them, calling them “my little precious while pressing her chin against their chests. She had made them each a bunny hat with frills (Jin, 2000, p. 291).

Lin now with basically two families, could be very happy, because even Manna Wu admitted that "...if only she could have had a daughter like Hua" (Jin, 2000, p. 291).

Whereas Hua has a warm relationship with her half-brothers, in Nguyen's "Fatherland", the relationship between half-sisters Phuong and Vivien is not so unequivocal. They did not have the chance to spend time together when growing up. Phuong only knows Vivien from her mother's letters and photographs, which she sends every year to Mr. Ly.

Phuong's namesake, for example, was seven years older, fifteen centimeters taller, twenty kilos heavier, and, from the record in the photographs included with the letters, in possession of fairer, clearer skin; a thinner, straighter nose; and hair, clothing, shoes, and makeup that only became ever more fashionables as she graduated from a private girls' school, then from an elite college, followed by medical school and then a residency in Chicago (Nguyen, 2018, p. 182).

Vivien is a complete opposite of Phuong. In spite of being born in Vietnam, she was growing up in the US, so in her heart, behaviour and thinking, she is an American. Phuong is reserved, obliging and respectable to her family. Even though she has her desires, she keeps them to herself. She only shares them with her sister while they are bonding. For Phuong, her deepest desire is to be independent, like Vivien. Her biggest fear is the very core of her culture – to have a family life. Also, as a daughter, she would have to move to her husband's house and take care of his parents (Dosedlová et al., 2019). She expresses her concerns by saying: "If I stay here I'll marry some boy with no future and live with his family and have two children too soon and sleep in a room where I can touch both walls at the same time. I don't think I can stand it, I really don't" (Nguyen, 2018, p. 200).

On the contrary, Vivien, is lively and energetic, self-confident yet perhaps hypocritical. Hypocritical because she let her mother deceive Mr. Ly and agreed with lying about her real job and social status. Despite the fact that Vivien's mother has lived in the US for so long, her origin and Vietnamese culture is so rooted in her, that she created for her daughter a life full of academic and career achievements, in order not to 'lose her face', meaning being humiliated. It all comes down to a perception that family is the destiny of the individual in East-Asian culture, whereas in Western culture, the individual means the destiny for the family (Helle, 2017). In *Waiting*, Lin was also destined to marry his wife, because his parents decided that so.

Last significant character I would like to focus on is Bensheng from Ha Jin's *Waiting*. Bensheng is Shuyu's brother and his character seems fairly complicated. It may seem that he always defends his sister and supports her as well as his niece. What is more, he

undoubtedly helps them when Lin is away in the city, yet his motives are dubious. Is it really because of the family affiliation? By that I mean his family of course. His unwillingness to let his sister accept the divorce repeatedly goes beyond the acceptable. Once, "...Bensheng had gone berserk, threatening to retaliate if Lin divorced his sister. Moreover, Bensheng turned the whole village against him and spread the rumor that Lin had committed bigamy, taking a concubine in the city" (Jin, 2000, p. 101).

Another time, when Lin and Shuyu were at the court, "Bensheng and a dozen men from Goose Village had stood outside, waving spades, fails, hoes, shoulder poles. they threatened to create a disturbance if the judge granted Lin a divorce" (Jin. 2000, p. 123). This exemplifies how strong the community is. Yes, they were definitely influenced by Bensheng to do that, but it was their belief, Confucianism and high opinion of a family that made them so furious. It only proves how important the whole community is. Not even Lin's rank in the army and the fact that he is a doctor was useful to him. Once the people knew he wanted to divorce his devoted wife and mother of his child, they could not leave it without notice.

Bensheng appears to be a needy, greedy man who only wants the best for himself, and he is hiding it behind his sister's misfortune. On one hand he stands against Lin, on the other, he asks him for money. In one scene, after the divorce, Bensheng comes drunk to Lin's house and says: "Don't brother me! You snatched away my sister. Now you're taking Hua away from me. You bully me be-because I don't have a child. You, you're my born enemy. I want to get even with you" (Jin, 2000, p. 234). Bensheng is jealous and he envies Lin.

It must be taken into account that in 1978, a policy of one child was established in China (Kerr, 2013). Given the fact, how highly valued the notion of family is in a Chinese society, Lin with his three children, was a truly wealthy man. Also, he was a well-educated man, with a successful career. As for the career, Bensheng was also successful. His shop earned him enough money for him to have a comfortable life. Even though he had his wife, Shuyu and Hua were also his family. Hua was close to him, almost like a daughter he never had. When they both moved out from the countryside to the city, Bensheng probably really did believe his family was falling apart. Moreover, it was the last straw, because from Bensheng's point of view, Lin now had his ex-wife, his daughter and his current wife with the twins and he was left with nothing.

5. CONCLUSION

Books, fiction in particular, exhort us to unleash our imagination and dive into another world where we can identify ourselves with the characters within. It is one thing to be captured by a book and by the yarn the author spins, nevertheless it is completely something else to take a step back and look upon the story from a different point of view - to open our minds and notice sometimes small breadcrumbs, which might be overlooked at first. It is then, we are able to digest something more than a plot. When we are able to understand the characters, we gain insight into human nature. Moreover, if we transfer from the world of fiction into the real world and apply our CQ, all of our relationships may benefit from it. Therefore, the main goal of the first part of the thesis was to shed the light on the background of the cultural dimension theory by clarifying related terms such as culture, cultural values or cultural intelligence. The emphasis was on values, giving concrete examples from *Waiting* and “Fatherland”. On the basis of established researchers and specialists like Edward Hall, Geert Hofstede, Brooks Peterson and David Livermore, I prepared a foundation which supports the outcome of my work with the literary pieces. At the end of the first chapter, I touched upon the topic of religion, Confucianism in particular, which is an essential element of East-Asian culture.

One of the important notions to take away from this thesis is that not a single culture is either one thing or other thing completely on the scale of cultural values. Chinese or Vietnamese culture is not only collectivist in its thinking, and American culture is not only individualistic. Still generalizations, based on the data generated by CQ research allows us to profit from our cultural intelligence. Even so, society consists of individuals. Those individuals have their personal desires and dreams, and depending on what culture they are from, they struggle to gratify them or suppress them accordingly.

The outcome of this thesis could be looked upon from the point of view of the individuals. In the thesis, when providing the explanation of the cultural values - dimensions, indulgence was briefly brought up as well. Although this thesis dealt with mostly the behaviour, decision making of the characters and the relationships between the characters, desire is unifying theme of the thesis. Each and every character has something they long for. Desire is a common tissue connecting both literary works. As an illustration, here are some desires of characters from *Waiting*: Lin longs for a divorce and a beautiful new wife, Manna Wu is desperately waiting for Lin, yearning for her romantic idea of love to come true, Hua wants her family to hold up together and Bensheng essentially wants what Lin has - wealth, family, children. The “Fatherland” characters also reveal their wishes, especially

Phuong. Phuong aches for her father's attention and appreciation to some extent, yet at the same time she wants to be independent, successful and more importantly away from her father. Notably, Mr. Ly selfishly envies his children's accomplishments. On purpose, I have not mentioned Shuyu. She seems to be the most grounded character of all. With her patient countenance, bound feet, dedication to the family and household, she is the true image of classical Chinese culture. Her wishes are so modest and subtly expressed. More importantly her wishes and desires are not focused on her, but on the well-being of others.

This thesis dealt with characters or individuals coping with their struggles in the midst of collectivist cultures. While in their native cultures, they are used to keeping in mind the greater good of the whole, would they be really able to accept the inner freedom of decision making and what about the feeling of loneliness that comes with an individualistic mind set. How would these individuals deal with their desires in an individualist culture without the presence of their family (which now they may feel more as a stress or pressure factor) from their native culture? Throughout the literary piece *The Refugees*, we encounter people who must face the reality of the individualist culture. All of the stories from *The Refugees* (maybe apart from "Fatherland") deal with this reversed situation where the individuals struggle to grasp onto their newly won freedom because they do not have the stability provided by the environment of their native culture.

Family is a vast topic, and it is important in both collectivist and individualist cultures. It is possible to apply the outcome of the analysis on other works of fiction, as well as real-life communication. Ha Jin spent his childhood and early adulthood in China, so family is a frequent topic in his work. Ha Jin's novel from 2007 *A Free Life*, would be a great source for further research as it follows the life of a family which leaves China after the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre and starts their new life in the USA. Again, we witness the struggles of the individuals - immigrants, refugees, as they move to unfamiliar territory. It would be interesting to analyse the reversed situation - how from collectivist countries with a completely different political regime deal with their new life in an individualist country with democratic system. Also, another interesting factor could be the shift in time in comparison with both of the primary texts I worked with. Overall, it would be possible and thought-provoking to compare this newer novel with the ones analysed in this thesis.

In connection to the idea of looking at things in reverse, Viet Thanh Nguyen also offers a great opportunity for further research not only with the rest of the stories from *The Refugees*, but also with his latest long-awaited novel *The Committed*, published in 2021. The book is a follow-up of *The Sympathizer*. The story follows the same protagonist from the

The Sympathizer, life of a secret agent especially adept at blending in to Western culture – – In the new novel he goes to Paris where he is as a refugee. Thus, again there is the reversed situation of the individual from the collectivist culture dealing with the life struggles in an individualist culture.

By exploring cultural dimension theory and using our cultural intelligence reading fiction becomes more enriching. Notwithstanding, through books such as these, we have the opportunity to expand our horizons and improve the interaction with people from different cultures and even understand the usefulness of some stereotypes. Moreover, we can share our knowledge with other people to maybe spark an interest for them, to open their eyes and look at things from another perspective.

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SHRNUTÍ

Předmětem této bakalářské práce je rozbor literárních děl *Waiting* od Ha Jina a *The Refugees* od Viet Thanh Nguyena. Oba autoři pocházejí z východní Asie. V obou textech se setkáme s tématem rodiny a rodinných vztahů. Dále se v dílech objevuje, jak se jednotlivé postavy vypořádávají s vlivem dané kultury na jejich životy, a to především s rozhodnutími v různých oblastech jejich života. Tato práce porovnává texty v rámci antropologického výkladu pojmu kultura a zároveň nahlíží na texty skrze teorii kulturních dimenzí. Analýza dokládá, že při zužitkování znalostí z oblasti teorie kultur, stejně tak jako zlepšováním naší kulturní inteligence, jsme schopni dohlédnout za pomyslnou hranici slov a odhalit tak další vrstvy příběhu. Tyto znalosti nám umožní celkově zlepšit naše vztahy, jak osobní, tak pracovní a jsme schopni lépe pochopit lidi z jiných kultur. Tato práce se dále soustředí na téma rodiny na pozadí kultur východní Asie v širším slova smyslu. V kontrastu s tím můžeme sledovat chování postav z individualistických kultur. Analýza postav z obou děl dokládá, že o žádné kultuře nemůžeme říci, že by byla buď individualistická či kolektivistická. Tato práce dokládá, že lidé z kolektivistických kultur mají také své individuální touhy a potřeby, které si přejí uspokojit i přesto, že vnímají tlak z prostředí dané kultury.