**High/Low Context Communication and The Geography of Thought**

**A. High/Low Context Communication:** How much we actually need to talk, or how explicit or direct we need to be in order to communicate depends on how much shared information is available to us in our cultural or situational context.

In HIGH CONTEXT cultures or situations, participants

* have a lot in common and are quite homogenous in some way(s)
* have a high amount of shared information or common rules
* do not need to verbalize everything to understand what’s going on
* do not need to talk explicitly to communicate effectively, so
* usually value indirect or non-verbal communication and silence
* try to maintain harmony and avoid conflict, and
* tend to think the most talkative people are not the smartest, and being direct is rude!

In LOW CONTEXT cultures or situations, participants

* are diverse and can not assume much in common
* have low amounts of shared information or common rules
* need to verbalize in order to understand each other and what’s going on
* can not depend on implication or indirectness to communicate effectively, so
* usually value talk and direct expression
* try to resolve conflict by “working through it”, and
* tend to think the best talkers are the smartest people, and that being indirect is confusing!

**B. Complete the self-assessment and compare your results with your group mates**.

What were some similarities and differences between different members of the group?

What might explain some of those similarities and differences? Be prepared to summarize

your discussion for the whole class.

**C. Geography of Thought:** Quickly skim the article “How East and West Differ in Thinking

Habits” and discuss the following questions with your group mates:

1. What is Nisbett’s thesis? What evidence does he provide to support it?

2. What do you think of his thesis? Do you find his evidence and argument persuasive?

3. Discuss any personal experience or observations you may have that either support

or contradict Nisbett’s thesis.

4. Outline the highlights of your discussion for the rest of the class.