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## **DIMENSIONALIZING CULTURES: THE HOFSTEDE MODEL IN CONTEXT**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This article describes briefly the Hofstede model of five dimensions of national cultures: Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism, Masculinity and Long Term Orientation. It shows the conceptual and research efforts that preceded it and led up to it, and once it had become a paradigm for comparing cultures, research efforts that followed and built on it. The article stresses that dimensions depend on the level of aggregation; it describes the six entirely different dimensions found in the Hofstede *et al.* research into organizational cultures. It warns against confusion with value differences at the individual level. It concludes with a look ahead in what the study of dimensions of national cultures and the position of countries on them may still bring.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Culture has been defined in many ways; this author's shorthand definition is: "*Culture is the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others*". It is always a collective phenomenon, but it can be connected to different collectives. Within each collective there is a variety of individuals. If characteristics of individuals are imagined as varying according to some bell curve; the variation between cultures is the shift of the bell curve when one moves from one society to the other. Most commonly the term culture is used for tribes or ethnic groups (in anthropology), for nations (in political science, sociology and management), and for organizations (in sociology and management). A relatively unexplored field is the culture of occupations (for instance, of engineers versus accountants, or of academics from different disciplines). The term can also be applied to the genders, to generations, or to social classes. However, changing the level of aggregation studied changes the nature of the concept of 'culture'. Societal, national and gender cultures, which children acquire from their earliest youth onwards, are much deeper rooted in the human mind than occupational cultures acquired at university, or than organizational cultures acquired on the job. The latter are exchangeable when people take a new job. Societal cultures reside in (often unconscious) values, in the sense of *broad tendencies to prefer certain states of affairs over others* (Hofstede, 2001:5). Organizational cultures reside rather in (visible and conscious) practices: the way people perceive what goes on in their organizational environment.

### **CLASSIFYING CULTURES: CONCEPTUAL DIMENSIONS**

In an article first published in 1952, U.S. anthropologist Clyde Kluckhohn argued that there should be universal categories of culture:

"In principle ... there is a generalized framework that underlies the more apparent and striking facts of cultural relativity. All cultures constitute so many somewhat distinct answers to essentially the same questions posed by human biology and by the generalities of the human situation. ... Every society's patterns for living must provide approved and sanctioned ways for dealing with such universal circumstances as the existence of two sexes; the helplessness of infants; the need for satisfaction of the elementary biological requirements such as food, warmth, and sex; the presence of individuals of different ages and of differing physical and other capacities" (Kluckhohn, 1962:317-18).

Many authors in the second half of the twentieth century have speculated about the nature of the basic problems of societies that would present distinct dimensions of culture (for a review see Hofstede, 2001, 29-31). The most common dimension used for ordering societies is their degree of economic evolution or modernity. A one-dimensional ordering of societies from traditional to modern fitted well with the nineteenth- and twentieth-century belief in progress. Economic evolution is bound to be reflected in people's collective mental programming, but there is no reason why economic and technological evolution should suppress other cultural variety. There must be dimensions of culture unrelated to economic evolution.

U.S. anthropologist Edward T. Hall (1976) divided cultures according to their ways of communicating, into high-context (much of the information is implicit) and low-context (nearly everything is explicit). In practice this distinction overlaps largely with the traditional versus modern distinction.

U.S. sociologists Talcott Parsons and Edward Shils (1951:77) suggested that all human action is determined by five *pattern variables*, choices between pairs of alternatives:

- (1) *Affectivity* (need gratification) versus *affective neutrality* (restraint of impulses);
- (2) *Self-orientation* versus *collectivity-orientation*;
- (3) *Universalism* (applying general standards) versus *particularism* (taking particular relationships into account);
- (4) *Ascription* (judging others by who they are) versus *achievement* (judging them by what they do);
- (5) *Specificity* (limiting relations to others to specific spheres) versus *diffuseness* (no prior limitations to nature of relations).

Parsons and Shils claimed that these choices are present at the individual (personality) level, at the social system (group or organization) level, and at the cultural (normative) level. They did not take into account that different variables could operate at different aggregation levels.

U.S. anthropologists Florence Kluckhohn and Fred Strodtbeck (1961:12) ran a field study in five geographically close, small communities in the Southwestern United States: Mormons, Spanish Americans, Texans, Navaho Indians, and Zuni Indians. They distinguished these communities on the following value orientations:

- (1) An evaluation of *human nature* (evil - mixed - good);
- (2) The relationship of man to the surrounding *natural environment* (subjugation - harmony - mastery);
- (3) The orientation in *time* (toward past - present - future);
- (4) The orientation toward *activity* (being - being in becoming - doing); and
- (5) *Relationships among people* (lineality [that is, hierarchically ordered positions] - collaterality [that is, group relationships] - individualism).

Others have extrapolated Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's classification to all kind of social comparisons, without concern for their geographic limitations without considering the effect of levels of aggregation, and without empirical support.

British anthropologist Mary Douglas (1973) proposed a two-dimensional ordering of ways of looking at the world:

- (1) 'Group' or inclusion - the claim of groups over members, and
- (2) 'Grid' or classification - the degree to which interaction is subject to rules.

Douglas saw these as relating to a wide variety of beliefs and social actions: Views of nature, traveling, spatial arrangements, gardening, cookery, medicine, the meaning of time, age, history, sickness, and justice. She seemed to imply that these dimensions are applicable to any level of aggregation.

The one- or more-dimensional classifications above represent subjective reflective attempts to order a complex reality. Each of them is strongly colored by the subjective choices of its author(s). They show some overlap, but their lack of clarity about and mixing of levels of analysis (individual-group-culture) are severe methodological weaknesses.

These weaknesses were avoided in an extensive review article by U.S. sociologist Alex Inkeles and psychologist Daniel Levinson (1954). The authors limited themselves to culture at the level of nations, and they summarized all available sociological and anthropological studies dealing with what was then called *national character*, which they interpreted as a kind of modal (most common) personality type in a national society. What I have labeled *dimensions* they called *standard analytic issues*. They proposed:

"To concentrate, for purposes of comparative analysis, on a limited number of psychological issues ... that meet at least the following criteria. First, they should be found in adults universally, as a function both of maturational potentials common to man and of socio-cultural characteristics common to human societies. Second, the manner in which they are handled should have functional significance for the individual personality as well as for the social system" (1969:44).

From their survey of the literature Inkeles and Levinson distilled three standard analytic issues that met these criteria:

- (1) Relation to authority;
- (2) Conception of self, including the individual's concepts of masculinity and femininity; and
- (3) Primary dilemmas or conflicts, and ways of dealing with them, including the control of aggression and the expression versus inhibition of affect.

As will be shown below, Inkeles and Levinson's standard analytic issues were empirically supported in a study by this author more than 20 years later.

## **EMPIRICAL APPROACHES AND THE HOFSTEDE DIMENSIONS**

In 1949 U.S. psychologist Raymond Cattell published an application of the new statistical technique of factor analysis to the comparison of nations. Cattell had earlier used factor analysis for studying aspects of intelligence from test scores of individual students. This time he took a matrix of nation-level variables for a large number of countries, borrowing from geography, demographics, history, politics, economics, sociology, law, religion and medicine. The resulting factors were difficult to interpret, except for the important role of economic development. Replications of his method by others produced trivial results (for a review see Hofstede, 2001:32-33). More meaningful were applications to restricted facets of societies. U.S. political

scientists Phillip Gregg and Arthur Banks (1965) studied aspects of political systems; U.S. economists Irma Adelman and Cynthia Taft Morris (1967) studied factors influencing the development of poor countries, and Irish psychologist Richard Lynn (1971; with S.L. Hampson, 1975) studied aspects of mental health..

In the 1970s this author more or less by accident got access to a large survey database about values and related sentiments of people in over 50 countries around the world (Hofstede, 1980). These people worked in the local subsidiaries of one large multinational corporation: IBM. Most parts of the organization had been surveyed twice over a four-year interval, and the database contained more than 100,000 questionnaires. Initial analyses of the database at the level of individual respondents proved confusing, but a breakthrough occurred when the focus was directed at correlations between mean scores of survey items at the level of countries. Patterns of correlation at the country level could be strikingly different from what was found at the individual level, and needed an entirely different interpretation.

My hunch that the IBM data might have implications beyond this particular corporation was supported when I got the opportunity to administer a number of the same questions to nearly 400 management trainees from some 30 countries in an international program unrelated to IBM. Their mean scores by country correlated significantly with the country scores obtained from the IBM database. So it seemed that employees of this multinational - a very special kind of people - could serve for identifying differences in *national* value systems. The reason is that from one country to another they represented almost perfectly matched samples: they were similar in all respects except nationality, which made the effect of national differences in their answers stand out unusually clearly.

Encouraged by the results of the country-level correlation analysis I then tried country-level factor analysis. The latter was similar to the approach used earlier by Cattell and others, except that now the variables in the matrix were not indices for the country as a whole, but mean scores and sometimes percentages of survey answers collected from individuals in those countries. Analyses of data at higher levels of aggregation are sometimes called *ecological*. Ecological factor analysis differs from the factor analysis of individual scores in that a usual caution no longer applies: the number of cases does not need to be (much) larger than the numbers of variables. The stability of the results of an ecological factor analysis does not depend on the number of cases, but on the number of individuals whose scores were aggregated into these cases. One may even start from a matrix with fewer cases than variables.

Factor analyzing a matrix of 32 values questions for initially 40 countries, I found these values to cluster very differently from what was found at the individual level. The new factors revealed common problems with which IBM employees in all these societies had to cope, but for which their upbringing in their country presented its own profile of solutions. These problems were:

- (1) Dependence on superiors;
- (2) Need for rules and predictability, also associated with nervous stress;
- (3) The balance between individual goals and dependence on the company;
- (4) The balance between ego values (like the need for money and careers) and social values (like cooperation and a good living environment). The former were more frequently chosen by men, the latter by women, but there were also country differences.

These empirical results were strikingly similar to the *standard analytical issues* described in Inkeles and Levinson's 1954 article. Dependence on superiors relates to the first, need for predictability to the third, the balance between the individual and the company to the conception of self, and the balance between ego and

social values to concepts of masculinity and femininity, which were also classified under the second standard analytic issue.

The four basic problem areas defined by Inkeles and Levinson and empirically supported in the IBM data represent dimensions of national cultures. A dimension is an aspect of a culture that can be measured relative to other cultures. Later, on the basis of research by Canadian psychologist Michael Harris Bond centered in the Far East (Hofstede and Bond, 1988), a fifth dimension was added.

These dimensions were labeled (Hofstede, 1991, 2001):

- (1) *Power Distance*, related to the different solutions to the basic problem of human inequality;
- (2) *Uncertainty Avoidance*, related to the level of stress in a society in the face of an unknown future;
- (3) *Individualism* versus *Collectivism*, related to the integration of individuals into primary groups;
- (4) *Masculinity* versus *Femininity*, related to the division of emotional roles between women and men;
- (5) *Long Term* versus *Short Term Orientation*, related to the choice of focus for people's efforts: the future or the present and past.

Each country could be positioned relative to other countries through a score on each dimension. The dimensions were statistically distinct and occurred in all possible combinations, although some combinations were more frequent than others.

After the initial confirmation of the country differences in IBM in data from management trainees elsewhere, the IBM dimensions and country scores were validated through replications by others, using the same or similar questions with other cross-national populations. Between 1990 and 2002 six major replications (14 or more countries) used country elites, employees and managers of other corporations and organizations, airline pilots, consumers and civil servants; see Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005:26.

A breakthrough in the research occurred when country scores on the dimensions turned out to correlate significantly with conceptually related external data. Thus Power Distance scores correlated with a dimension from Gregg and Banks' analysis of political systems and also with a dimension from Adelman and Morris' study of economic development; Uncertainty Avoidance correlated with a dimension from Lynn and Hampson's study of mental health; Individualism correlated strongly with national wealth (Gross National Product per capita) and Femininity with the percentage of national income spent on development aid. These external validations are continued, and the second edition of *Culture's Consequences* (Hofstede, 2001:503-20) lists more than 400 significant correlations between the IBM-based scores and results of other studies. Recent validations show no loss of validity, indicating that the country differences these dimensions describe are, indeed, basic and long-term.

In correlating the dimensions with other data the influence of national wealth (Gross National Product per capita) should always be taken into account. Two of the dimensions, Individualism and small Power Distance, are significantly correlated with wealth. This means that all wealth-related phenomena tend also to correlate with these dimensions. Differences in national wealth can be considered a more parsimonious explanation of these other phenomena than differences in culture. In correlating with the culture dimensions, it is therefore advisable to always include the wealth variable. After controlling for wealth correlations with culture may disappear. The shared correlation of Individualism and (small) Power Distance with national wealth implies that these dimensions tend to be intercorrelated. However, if national wealth is controlled for, this intercorrelation usually disappears.

Of particular interest is a link that was found between culture according to the Hofstede dimensions and personality dimensions according to the empirically based Big Five personality test (Costa and McCrae, 1992). This test has now been used in over 30 countries, and significant correlations were found between

country norms on the personality dimensions (Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to experience, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness) and culture dimension scores. For example, 55% of country differences on Neuroticism can be explained by a combination of Uncertainty Avoidance and Masculinity, and 39% of country differences on Extraversion by Individualism alone (Hofstede and McCrae, 2002). So culture and personality are linked but the link is statistical, and should not be used for stereotyping individuals.

Validating the dimensions is of course not only and not even mainly a quantitative issue. Equally important is the qualitative interpretation of what differences on the dimensions mean for each of the societies studied, which calls for an *emic* approach to each society, linking it to the *etic* of the dimensional data.

## THE HOFSTEDE DIMENSIONS IN A NUTSHELL

**Table 1**

### **Ten Differences Between Small- and Large- Power Distance Societies**

<b>Small Power Distance</b>	<b>Large Power Distance</b>
• Use of power should be legitimate and is subject to criteria of good and evil	• Power is a basic fact of society antedating good or evil: its legitimacy is irrelevant
• Parents treat children as equals	• Parents teach children obedience
• Older people are neither respected nor feared	• Older people are both respected and feared
• Student-centered education	• Teacher-centered education
• Hierarchy means inequality of roles, established for convenience	• Hierarchy means existential inequality
• Subordinates expect to be consulted	• Subordinates expect to be told what to do
• Pluralist governments based on majority vote and changed peacefully	• Autocratic governments based on co-optation and changed by revolution
• Corruption rare; scandals end political careers	• Corruption frequent; scandals are covered up
• Income distribution in society rather even	• Income distribution in society very uneven
• Religions stressing equality of believers	• Religions with a hierarchy of priests

*Power Distance* has been defined as the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions (like the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. This represents inequality (more versus less), but defined from below, not from above. It suggests that a society's level of inequality is endorsed by the followers as much as by the leaders. Power and inequality, of course, are extremely fundamental facts of any society. All societies are unequal, but some are more unequal than other. Table 1 lists a selection of differences between national societies that validation research showed to be associated with the Power Distance dimension. For a more complete review the reader is referred to Hofstede, 2001 and/or Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005. The statements refer to extremes; actual situations may be found

anywhere in between the extremes, and the association of a statement with a dimension is always statistical, never absolute.

Power distance index scores were higher for East European, Latin, Asian and African countries and lower for Germanic and English-speaking Western countries.

**Table 2**

**Ten Differences Between Weak- and Strong- Uncertainty Avoidance Societies**

<b>Weak Uncertainty Avoidance</b>	<b>Strong Uncertainty Avoidance</b>
• The uncertainty inherent in life is accepted and each day is taken as it comes	• The uncertainty inherent in life is felt as a continuous threat that must be fought
• Ease, lower stress, self-control, low anxiety	• Higher stress, emotionality, anxiety, neuroticism
• Higher scores on subjective health and well-being	• Lower scores on subjective health and well-being
• Tolerance of deviant persons and ideas: what is different is curious	• Intolerance of deviant persons and ideas: what is different is dangerous
• Comfortable with ambiguity and chaos	• Need for clarity and structure
• Teachers may say ‘I don’t know’	• Teachers supposed to have all the answers
• Changing jobs no problem	• Staying in jobs even if disliked
• Dislike of rules - written or unwritten	• Emotional need for rules – even if not obeyed
• In politics, citizens feel and are seen as competent towards authorities	• In politics, citizens feel and are seen as incompetent towards authorities
• In religion, philosophy and science: relativism and empiricism	• In religion, philosophy and science: belief in ultimate truths and grand theories

*Uncertainty Avoidance* is not the same as risk avoidance; it deals with a society's tolerance for ambiguity. It indicates to what extent a culture programs its members to feel either uncomfortable or comfortable in unstructured situations. Unstructured situations are novel, unknown, surprising, different from usual. Uncertainty avoiding cultures try to minimize the possibility of such situations by strict behavioral codes, laws and rules, disapproval of deviant opinions, and a belief in absolute Truth; 'there can only be one Truth and we have it'. Research has shown that people in uncertainty avoiding countries are also more emotional, and motivated by inner nervous energy. The opposite type, uncertainty accepting cultures, are more tolerant of opinions different from what they are used to; they try to have fewer rules, and on the philosophical and religious level they are relativist and allow different currents to flow side by side. People within these cultures are more phlegmatic and contemplative, and not expected by their environment to express emotions. Table 2 lists a selection of differences between societies that validation research showed to be associated with the Uncertainty Avoidance dimension.

Uncertainty avoidance scores are higher in East and Central European countries, in Latin countries, in Japan and in German speaking countries, lower in English speaking, Nordic and Chinese culture countries

**Table 3**  
**Ten Differences Between Collectivist and Individualist Societies**

<b>Individualism</b>	<b>Collectivism</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Everyone is supposed to take care of him- or herself and his or her immediate family only</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People are born into extended families or clans which protect them in exchange for loyalty</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "I" - consciousness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "We" -consciousness</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Right of privacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stress on belonging</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speaking one's mind is healthy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harmony should always be maintained</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Others classified as individuals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Others classified as in-group or out-group</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal opinion expected: one person one vote</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opinions and votes predetermined by in-group</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transgression of norms leads to guilt feelings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transgression of norms leads to shame feelings</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Languages in which the word "I" is indispensable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Languages in which the word "I" is avoided</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purpose of education is learning how to learn</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purpose of education is learning how to do</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Task prevails over relationship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationship prevails over task</li> </ul>

*Individualism* on the one side versus its opposite, *Collectivism*, as a societal, not an individual characteristic, is the degree to which people in a society are integrated into groups. On the individualist side we find cultures in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after him/herself and his/her immediate family. On the collectivist side we find cultures in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, often extended families (with uncles, aunts and grandparents) that continue protecting them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty. Again, the issue addressed by this dimension is an extremely fundamental one, regarding all societies in the world. Table 3 lists a selection of differences between societies that validation research showed to be associated with this dimension

Individualism prevails in developed and Western countries, while collectivism prevails in less developed and Eastern countries; Japan takes a middle position on this dimension.

*Masculinity* versus its opposite, *Femininity*, again as a national, not as an individual characteristic, refers to the distribution of values between the genders which is another fundamental issue for any society, to which a range of solutions are found. The IBM studies revealed that (a) women's values differ less among societies than men's values; (b) men's values from one country to another contain a dimension from very assertive and competitive and maximally different from women's values on the one side, to modest and caring and similar to women's values on the other. The assertive pole has been called 'masculine' and the modest, caring pole

'feminine'. The women in feminine countries have the same modest, caring values as the men; in the masculine countries they are somewhat assertive and competitive, but not as much as the men, so that these countries show a gap between men's values and women's values. In masculine cultures there is sometimes a taboo around this dimension (Hofstede *et al*, 1998). Taboos are based on deeply rooted values; this taboo shows that the Mas/Fem dimension in some societies touches basic and often unconscious values, too painful to be explicitly discussed. In fact the taboo validates the importance of the dimension. Table 4 lists a selection of differences between societies that validation research showed to be associated with this dimension

**Table 4**  
**Ten Differences Between Feminine and Masculine Societies**

<b>Femininity</b>	<b>Masculinity</b>
• Minimum emotional and social role differentiation between the genders	• Maximum emotional and social role differentiation between the genders
• Men and women should be modest and caring	• Men should be and women may be assertive and ambitious
• Balance between family and work	• Work prevails over family
• Sympathy for the weak	• Admiration for the strong
• Both fathers and mothers deal with facts and feelings	• Fathers deal with facts, mothers with feelings
• Both boys and girls may cry but neither should fight	• Girls cry, boys don't; boys should fight back, girls shouldn't fight
• Mothers decide on number of children	• Fathers decide on family size
• Many women in elected political positions	• Few women in elected political positions
• Religion focuses on fellow human beings	• Religion focuses on God or gods
• Matter-of-fact attitudes about sexuality; sex is a way of relating	• Moralistic attitudes about sexuality; sex is a way of performing

Masculinity is high in Japan, in German speaking countries, and in some Latin countries like Italy and Mexico; it is moderately high in English speaking Western countries; it is low in Nordic countries and in the Netherlands and moderately low in some Latin and Asian countries like France, Spain, Portugal, Chile, Korea and Thailand.

**Table 5**

**Ten Differences Between Short- and Long-Term-Oriented Societies**

**Short-Term Orientation**

- Most important events in life occurred in the past or take place now
- Immediate need gratification expected
- There are universal guidelines about what is good and evil
- Traditions are sacrosanct
- Family life guided by imperatives
- What one thinks and says should be true
- Children should learn tolerance and respect
- Social spending and consumption
- Unstructured problem solving
- In business, stress on short-term profits

**Long-Term Orientation**

- Most important events in life will occur in the future
- Need gratification deferred until later
- What is good and evil depends upon the circumstances
- Traditions are adaptable to changed circumstances
- Family life guided by shared tasks
- What one does should be virtuous
- Children should learn to be thrifty
- Saving, investing
- Structured, mathematical problem solving
- In business, stress on future market position

*Long-Term versus Short-Term Orientation:* this fifth dimension was found in a study among students in 23 countries around the world, using a questionnaire designed by Chinese scholars (Hofstede and Bond, 1988). Values associated with Long Term Orientation are thrift and perseverance; values associated with Short Term Orientation are respect for tradition, fulfilling social obligations, and protecting one's 'face'. Both the positively and the negatively rated values of this dimension are found in the teachings of Confucius around 500 B.C. So it is not correct to equal Long-Term Orientation with Confucianism; it represents a focus on the future-oriented maxims of Confucianism, at the expense of the past-oriented ones. Also, the dimension applies equally well to countries without a Confucian heritage. . Table 5 lists a selection of differences between societies that validation research showed to be associated with this dimension.

Long-term oriented are East Asian countries, in particular in China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea but to a lesser extent also India and Brazil. A medium term orientation is found in most European countries, but the U.S.A. and Britain are more short term oriented. A very short term orientation is found in Africa and in a number of Islamic countries

**OTHER APPLICATIONS OF THE DIMENSIONAL PARADIGM**

When *Culture's Consequences* appeared in 1980, it represented a new paradigm in social science research: analysing survey-based values data at the national level and quantifying differences between national cultures by positions on these dimensions. Like other new paradigms, it initially met with rejection, criticism and ridicule next to enthusiasm (Kuhn, 1970). By the 1990s the paradigm had been taken over by many

others, and discussions shifted to the content and number of dimensions. The paradigm inspired a number of other studies into dimensions of national cultures.

Many studies further explored the dimension of individualism and collectivism (e.g. Kim et al., 1994; Triandis, 1995; Hofstede, 2001:Chapter 5)). From all the Hofstede dimensions, this one met with the most positive reactions among psychologists, especially in the U.S.A. which happened to be the highest scoring country on it. Ind/Col scores were strongly correlated with national wealth which led some people to the conclusion that promoting individualism in other cultures would contribute to their economic development. In fact, data show that the causality is most probably reversed: wealth tends to lead to individualism (Hofstede, 2001:253). The individualism in U.S. culture also led people to studying it at the *individual* level (comparing one person to another), not at the level of societies. In this case it is no longer a dimension of culture but possibly a dimension of personality. Also there is no more reason why individualism and collectivism need to be opposite; they should rather be considered separate aspects of personality. An extensive review of studies of individualism *at the individual level* was published by Oyserman, Coon and Kimmelmeier (2002). Comparing these studies across societies they found a different ranking of countries from the Hofstede studies; but Schimmack, Oishi and Diener (2005) proved this was due to a methodological error: Oyserman *et al.* forgot to control for acquiescence (response set), and the acquiescence in their data was significantly negatively correlated with the object of their study which made their results random.

The cultural focus on the Individualism versus Collectivism dimension led Triandis (1995) to splitting it into horizontal and vertical individualism. This split overlooks the fact that the Hofstede dimension of large versus small Power Distance already covered the horizontal/vertical aspect quite satisfactorily. From my point of view the horizontal/ vertical distinction for Ind/Col as a dimension of culture is redundant. It may be useful at the individual level, but this is for others to decide.

Like individualism and collectivism, the terms masculinity and femininity have also been used for describing values at the individual level. Earlier studies by U.S. psychologist Sandra Bem (1974) showed already that in this case masculinity and femininity should again rather be treated as separate aspects than as opposite poles.

An important alternative application of the dimensional paradigm was developed by the Israeli psychologist Shalom Schwartz. From a survey of the literature, Schwartz composed a list of 56 values. Through a network of colleagues he collected scores from samples of elementary school teachers and of college students in over 50 countries. (Schwartz, 1994; Schwartz and Bardi, 2001). Respondents scored the importance of each value 'as a guiding principle in my life'. Schwartz at first assumed the same dimensions would apply to individuals and to countries, but his data showed he needed different classifications at different levels. At the country level he distinguished seven dimensions: Conservatism, Hierarchy, Mastery, Affective autonomy, Intellectual autonomy, Egalitarian commitment and Harmony. Country scores for teachers published by Schwartz in 1994 were significantly correlated with the IBM scores for Individualism, Masculinity and Uncertainty Avoidance (Hofstede, 2001, p.265).

Another large scale application was the GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness) project, conceived by US management scholar Robert J. House in 1991. At first House focused on leadership, but soon the study branched out into other aspects of national and organizational cultures. In the period 1994-1997 some 170 voluntary collaborators collected data from about 17,000 managers in nearly 1,000 local (non-multinational) organizations belonging to one of three industries: food processing, financial services, and telecommunication services, in some 60 societies throughout the world. In the preface to the book describing the project (House *et al.*, 2004), House writes "We have a very adequate dataset to replicate Hofstede's (1980) landmark study and extend that study to test hypotheses relevant to relationships among societal-level variables, organizational practices, and leader attributes and behavior".

For conceptual reasons GLOBE expanded the five Hofstede dimensions to nine. They maintained the labels Power Distance and Uncertainty Avoidance (but not necessarily their meaning). They split Collectivism into Institutional Collectivism and In-Group Collectivism, and Masculinity-Femininity into Assertiveness and Gender Egalitarianism. Long Term Orientation became Future Orientation. They added two more dimensions: Humane Orientation and Performance Orientation. The nine dimensions were covered by 78 survey questions, half of them asking respondents to describe their culture ('as is') and the other half to judge it ('should be'). GLOBE thus produced  $9 \times 2 = 18$  culture scores for each country: nine dimensions 'as is' and nine dimensions 'should be'.

In an evaluation of the GLOBE project (Hofstede, forthcoming), I re-factor analyzed the country scores on GLOBE's 18 dimensions. Five meta-factors emerged, of which the strongest, grouping seven of the 18 measures, was highly significantly correlated with GNP per capita and next with the Hofstede Power Distance dimension. Three more meta-factors were significantly correlated with respectively the Hofstede Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism and Long Term Orientation dimensions. The GLOBE questionnaire contained very few items covering Masculinity in the Hofstede sense, but whatever there was belonged to the fifth meta-factor. The results show that in spite of a very different approach, the massive body of GLOBE data still reflected the structure of the original Hofstede model.

An author sometimes cited as having researched dimensions of national culture is the Dutch management consultant Fons Trompenaars (1993). He distinguished seven conceptual dimensions, the first five borrowed from Parsons and Shils (1951) and the last two from Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) which he applied to the level of nations (see earlier in this article). Trompenaars collected a database of survey items related to these dimensions, but in the only statistical analysis of his data published so far, applying Multidimensional Scaling to some 9,000 questionnaires, only two interpretable factors emerged, both correlated with Hofstede's Individualism, one of these also with Power Distance (Smith, Trompenaars and Dugan, 1995; Smith, Dugan and Trompenaars, 1996). The only country scores that could be based on Trompenaars' data refer to these two flavors of individualism (Smith, Peterson and Schwartz, 2002). Trompenaars' claim to seven dimensions therefore lacks empirical support.

One large international survey effort that developed independently from the search for cultural dimensions is the World Values Survey led by U.S. political scientist Ronald Inglehart. A study of values via public opinion surveys was started in the early 1980s as the European Values Survey. In 1990 a second round was started, renamed the World Values Survey (WVS). It eventually covered some 60,000 respondents across 43 societies, representing about 70 per cent of the world's population with a questionnaire including more than 360 forced-choice questions. Areas covered were ecology, economy, education, emotions, family, gender and sexuality, government and politics, health, happiness, leisure and friends, morality, religion, society and nation, and work (Inglehart, Basañez and Moreno, 1998; Inglehart et al., 2004). Although the search for dimensions was not a primary purpose of this study, Inglehart in an overall statistical analysis found two key country-level factors which he called: 'Well-being versus survival' and 'Secular-rational versus traditional authority' (Inglehart, 1997, p.81-98). These were again significantly correlated with the Hofstede dimensions: Well-being versus survival correlated with a combination of Individualism and Masculinity; Secular-rational versus traditional authority negatively with Power Distance. Further analysis of the enormous WVS survey data bank may produce additional dimensions.

## **DIMENSIONS OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURES**

The dimensional paradigm has also been applied at the level of organizations. A research project similar to the IBM studies but focusing on organization rather than national cultures was carried out by this author and a team of collaborators in the 1980s (Hofstede *et al.*, 1990). Qualitative and quantitative data were collected in twenty work organizations or parts of organizations in the Netherlands and Denmark. The units studied varied from a toy manufacturing company to two municipal police corps. This study found large differences

among units in perceptions of daily practices but only modest differences in values, beyond those due to such basic facts as nationality, education, gender and age group.

Six independent dimensions allowed to describe the larger part of the variety in organization practices. These six dimensions can be used as a framework to describe organization cultures, but their research base in twenty units from two countries is too narrow to consider them as universally valid and sufficient. For describing organization cultures in other countries and/or in other types of organizations, additional dimensions may be necessary or some of the six may be less useful. The six dimensions were:

(1) *Process-oriented versus results-oriented*. Process-oriented cultures are dominated by technical and bureaucratic routines, results-oriented by a common concern for outcomes. This dimension was associated with the culture's degree of homogeneity: in results-oriented units, everybody perceived their practices in about the same way; in process-oriented units, there were vast differences in perception among different levels and parts of the unit. The degree of homogeneity of a culture is a measure of its 'strength': the study confirmed that strong cultures are more results-oriented than weak ones, and vice versa (Peters & Waterman, 1982).

(2) *Job-oriented versus employee-oriented*. The former assume responsibility for the employees' job performance only, and nothing more; employee-oriented cultures assume a broad responsibility for their members' well-being. At the level of individual managers, the distinction between job orientation and employee orientation has been popularized by Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid (1964). The Hofstede *et al.* study shows that job versus employee orientation is part of a culture and not (only) a choice for an individual manager. A unit's position on this dimension seems to be largely the result of historical factors, like the philosophy of its founder(s) and the presence or absence in its recent history of economic crises with collective layoffs.

(3) *Professional versus parochial*. In the former, the (usually highly educated) members identify primarily with their profession; in the latter, the members derive their identity from the organization for which they work. Sociology has long known this dimension as 'local' versus 'cosmopolitan', the contrast between an internal and an external frame of reference (Merton, 1949).

(4) *Open systems versus closed systems*. This dimension refers to the common style of internal and external communication, and to the ease with which outsiders and newcomers are admitted. This is the only one of the six dimensions for which a systematic difference was found between Danish and Dutch units. It seems that organizational openness is a societal characteristic of Denmark more than of the Netherlands. This shows that organization cultures also contain elements from national culture differences.

(5) *Tight versus loose control*. This dimension deals with the degree of formality and punctuality within the organization; it is partly a function of the unit's technology: banks and pharmaceutical companies can be expected to show tight control, research laboratories and advertising agencies loose control; but even with the same technology some units may still be tighter or looser than others.

(6) *Pragmatic versus normative*. The last dimension describes the prevailing way (flexible or rigid) of dealing with the environment, in particular with customers. Units selling services are likely to be found towards the pragmatic (flexible) side, units involved in the application of laws and rules towards the normative (rigid) side. This dimension measures the degree of 'customer orientation', which is a highly popular topic in the management literature.

## **DIMENSIONALITY OF CULTURES IN THE FUTURE**

The fact that the world around us is changing does not need to affect the usefulness of the dimensional paradigm; on the contrary, the paradigm can help us understand the internal logic and the implications of the changes.

Some critics suggest that the number of dimensions should be extended. Triandis (2004) has defended this position, and the GLOBE project actually tried to extend the five Hofstede dimensions to 18. But additional dimensions are only meaningful if they are both conceptually and statistically independent from those already available, and they should also be validated by significant correlations with conceptually related external measures. There is an epistemological reason why the number of meaningful dimensions will always be small. Dimensions should not be reified. They do not 'exist' in a tangible sense. They are constructs: if they exist, it is in our minds. They should help us in understanding and handling the complex reality of our social world. But human minds have a limited capacity for processing information, and therefore dimensional models that are too complex will not be experienced as useful. In a famous little article, Miller (1956) argued that useful classifications should not have more than seven categories, plus or minus two. I would go for the minus rather than the plus.

Within the dimensional model cultures can of course change their position on a dimension. Critics argue that Hofstede country scores based on IBM subsidiaries around 1970 are obsolete. But studies correlating the old country scores with related variables available on a year-by-year basis find no weakening of the correlations. A good reason for this is that the country scores on the five dimensions do not provide *absolute* country positions, but only their positions *relative to the other countries* in the set. The relationship of the dimensions to basic problems of societies and the historical evidence of the continuity of national solutions to such problems suggest that even over much longer periods the measures obtained will retain their validity. Influences like those of new technologies tend to affect all countries without necessarily changing their relative position or ranking; if their cultures change, they change in formation. Only if on a dimension one country leapfrogs over others will the validity of the original scores be reduced. This is a relatively rare occurrence.

Some authors predict that new technologies will make societies more and more similar. Technological modernization is an important force toward culture change and it leads to partly similar developments in different societies, but there is not the slightest proof that it wipes out variety on other dimensions. It may even increase differences, as on the basis of pre-existing value systems societies cope with technological modernization in different ways.

Culture change basic enough to invalidate the country dimension index rankings, or even the relevance of the dimensional model, will need either a much longer period - say, 50 to 100 years - or extremely dramatic outside events. Many differences between national cultures at the end of the 20th century were already recognizable in the years 1900, 1800 and 1700 if not earlier. There is no reason why they should not play a role until 2100 or beyond..

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## **APPLICATION EXERCISES**

(1) In today's newspaper, find an article about an event or situation in which cultural differences between persons born and educated in different countries may have played a role (there are always several). Which *one* of the five Hofstede dimensions is most useful for understanding what was said and done?\*

(2) Think of the last time you personally experienced a culture shock. Culture shock occurs when somebody becomes painfully aware that a person or persons born and educated in another country think(s), feel(s) and/or act(s) differently from what was expected. What happened and which *one* of the five Hofstede dimensions explains best the reason for the shock?\*

(3) Next time you attend an international meeting, compare the theories and ways of presentation of participants born and educated in different countries. Which *one* of the five Hofstede dimensions is most useful for understanding the differences in what was said and done?\*

(4) Draw the culture profile of the country or countries in which you were born and educated on the five Hofstede dimensions. Then imagine two persons from two different countries and imagine how each of them will describe your culture to a compatriot.\*

\* Culture scores of countries can be found in Hofstede & Hofstede (2005). They are also published on a website operated by ITIM consultants: [www.geert-hofstede.com](http://www.geert-hofstede.com) but the author is not responsible for the information presented on this website. The author's own website [www.geerthofstede.eu](http://www.geerthofstede.eu) contains no country scores.