CULTURAL DIFFERENCES AND ETHICS

S3

Welles,Nick N.H.M.

2022 - 2023

Table of content

[Introduction 2](#_Toc121400431)

[Culture 2](#_Toc121400432)

[What is culture? 2](#_Toc121400433)

[Which are well-known dimensions on cultural differences? 2](#_Toc121400434)

[My experience with cultural differences 2](#_Toc121400435)

[Internship at Whysor 3](#_Toc121400436)

[Internship at Concrefy 3](#_Toc121400437)

[Ethics 3](#_Toc121400438)

[What is ethics in software engineering? 3](#_Toc121400439)

[Why is ethics important in software engineering? 3](#_Toc121400440)

[What do you have to do as a software engineer to address ethical aspects in your work? 4](#_Toc121400441)

[How do you know that your ethical considerations match with those of other software engineers? 4](#_Toc121400442)

[My ethical choices 5](#_Toc121400443)

[Individual project 5](#_Toc121400444)

# Introduction

As a software engineer it is very likely that you will at one point in your profession cooperate with individuals from various societies. This combination of societies frequently ends up being enhancing and advantageous, yet may likewise prompt false impressions, clashes and diminished efficiency on the off chance that one isn't adequately mindful of expected social contrasts. It is accordingly critical to know about these distinctions so that these intercultural joint efforts might continue without a hitch.

# Culture

## What is culture?

To understand what differences in cultures are we need to understand what a culture is.  
Culture refers to the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving. It is the systems of knowledge shared by a relatively large group of people.

## Which are well-known dimensions on cultural differences?

One of the most well-known dimensions of cultural differences is Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions Theory. This theory was created by Dutch social psychologist Geert Hofstede and is based on research conducted in over 100 countries. It includes four primary dimensions:

* power distance
* individualism/collectivism
* masculinity/femininity
* uncertainty avoidance

These dimensions can help us understand how people from different cultures might approach different situations and interact with one another. For example, individualistic cultures tend to value individual autonomy and self-reliance, while collectivistic cultures place a greater emphasis on the needs and goals of the group. Understanding these differences can help us communicate more effectively with people from other cultures.

Sources: <https://www.mindtools.com/a1ecvyx/hofstedes-cultural-dimensions>   
 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture>

# My experience with cultural differences

As long as I have been alive (which is not very long) I have experienced some differences with cultures. Simply put; I went on vacation once to Turkey, Greece, Germany and Ireland. It is always very nice to see what daily life is like in countries other than where you are originally from. At the beginning you are gaining a lot of information about how things work there in order not to offend or question anyone. Although most people can see that you are a foreigner there.

I have also worked with people of other backgrounds besides Dutch during my internships. I will elaborate on a few of these experiences below.

## Internship at Whysor

During my internship at Whysor, another intern joined at Whysor, his and country of birth was Iran. He understood a little Dutch, but the conversations we had with him and colleagues were all in English.

This did take some getting used to since you work at a company where the main language is Dutch, you switch between languages all the time when talking to different people. Of course, you get used to this the longer you are with each other.

Sometimes it was difficult to understand each other. You have words that you translate directly, but in your language, words can mean something different than that in the language of your conversational partner.

All in all, though, this is a good, and mostly fun experience. You laugh with each other, you exchange typical cultural things with each other which also makes you get to know each other better, even though sometimes it seems like you are very far apart. For example, one time we went to his place for dinner with the whole company, and everything he prepared came from Iranian cuisine. So you also learn rituals that they do for food and you get to see and eat many new dishes that you will probably never see in the Dutch cuisine. That was a good experience that only made the bond stronger.

## Internship at Concrefy

At Concrefy, I was responsible for building a whole new website with various integrations regarding Marketing Automatization. During this process I was in contact with the person behind the marketing at Concrefy. Since Concrefy is located in the Netherlands as well as in Germany, I occasionally had conversations with German colleagues. Fortunately, the executive behind marketing could speak Dutch which made communication a lot easier.

Once a month they were in contact with the parent company in Austria. Then you sit in a meeting to get information about, for example, securing the website etc. Then they talk full-blown German and occasionally there is a word of English in between. Fortunately, I can understand German reasonably well, but when they try to talk faster, especially the Eastern version of German, or the dialect, then it is difficult to understand. At that point you realize that it is not necessarily the difference in culture, but also the difference in languages that is a barrier.

# Ethics

## What is ethics in software engineering?

Ethics in software engineering is a crucial topic that is gaining more attention as technology becomes more advanced and prevalent in our lives. As software engineers, we have a responsibility to consider the ethical implications of our work and to make sure that the software we create is used in an ethical manner. This involves taking into account a number of different factors, including privacy, fairness, and bias, as well as the potential impact of our work on society.

## Why is ethics important in software engineering?

One key aspect of software engineering ethics is the issue of privacy. In today's digital age, a vast amount of personal information is collected and stored online, and it is up to software engineers to ensure that this information is handled in a responsible and ethical way. For example, a software engineer may be asked to design a system that collects and stores sensitive personal information, such as financial data or medical records. In this situation, the engineer must carefully consider the potential risks to individuals' privacy and ensure that the system is designed in a way that protects this information from unauthorized access or misuse.

Another important aspect of software engineering ethics is the issue of fairness and bias. As software engineers, we must make sure that the systems we create are fair and unbiased, and do not discriminate against certain individuals or groups. For example, a software engineer may be asked to design an algorithm that is used to make decisions about hiring or promotion in a company. In this case, the engineer must carefully consider the potential for bias in the algorithm and ensure that it is designed in a way that is fair and objective.

## What do you have to do as a software engineer to address ethical aspects in your work?

As a software engineer, there are several steps you can take to address ethical aspects in your work. Some of the most important things you can do include:

1. Understand the ethical implications of your work: It is important to understand the potential ethical implications of the software you are creating and to consider how it might be used. This will help you identify potential ethical issues and take steps to address them.
2. Communicate with your team and stakeholders: Discuss the ethical implications of your work with your team and stakeholders, and make sure everyone is on the same page. This will help ensure that ethical considerations are taken into account throughout the development process.
3. Consider the potential risks to privacy: When working with sensitive personal information, it is important to consider the potential risks to privacy and to take steps to protect this information from unauthorized access or misuse. This might involve implementing strong security measures or limiting access to certain information.
4. Design systems to be fair and unbiased: It is important to ensure that the systems you design are fair and unbiased, and do not discriminate against certain individuals or groups. This might involve conducting testing to identify and address potential biases, or seeking input from diverse stakeholders to ensure that the system is fair and objective.
5. Stay up to date on ethical considerations: The field of software engineering is constantly evolving, and new ethical considerations may arise as technology advances. Stay up to date on the latest developments and best practices in the field, and be prepared to adapt your approach as needed.

## How do you know that your ethical considerations match with those of other software engineers?

There are several ways you can ensure that your ethical considerations match those of other software engineers.

You can join professional organizations or online communities focused on software engineering ethics, and engage with other members to discuss ethical considerations and best practices. You also can attend conferences and workshops focused on software engineering ethics, and listen to presentations and discussions on the topic. This will help you stay up to date on the latest thinking and developments in the field.  
Another option is to read industry publications and articles on software engineering ethics, and pay attention to how different experts and practitioners approach ethical considerations. This will give you a better understanding of the ethical considerations that are commonly accepted in the field.

Discuss ethical considerations with your colleagues: Talk to your colleagues about ethical considerations in software engineering, and compare your approaches and perspectives. This will help you better understand how others in your field approach ethical issues, and identify any potential differences in your views.

Overall, by engaging with others in the field and staying informed about the latest developments, you can ensure that your ethical considerations are in line with those of other software engineers.

Sources: <https://www.scu.edu/ethics/focus-areas/technology-ethics/>   
 <https://www.castsoftware.com/glossary/importance-of-software-engineering-code-of-ethics-future>

# My ethical choices

## Individual project

The only thing I have really thought hard about is managing the data of users who register on my website. What exactly does the user expect me to do with their data, and why do I need them?

An example would be address data. If a person orders a guitar and he/she wants it delivered to his/her home I obviously need the address data so that the package delivery person from my store, can drive to his/her home.   
Another example is storing the phone number. This is for example to send the user a text message when the package delivery man is on his way or almost there.

You can then put this kind of thing at a Web site under the privacy statement. Such a document contains such things about handling users' data.