## Hofstede's Dimensions of Culture

Geert H. Hofstede was born on October 2, 1928 in Haarlem, the Netherlands. He received his  M.Sc. from the Delft Institute of Technology in 1953, his Ph.D. (cum laude) from Groningen University in 1967. Hofstede served in the Netherlands Army from 1953 to 1955. In 1955, he married Maaike A. Van den Hoek. They've also "lived happily ever after", but I'm not sure where (probably Brussels, Belgium).

Hofstede is most well known for his work on four dimensions of cultural variability, commonly referred to as "Hofstede's Dimensions." These include: Uncertainty Avoidance, Power Distance, Masculinity-Femininity, Individualism-Collectivism, Confucian Dynamism. These dimensions were arrived in his 1980 publication, "Culture's consequences: International differences in work-related values." The study took existing survey data (sample size of 116,000) collected from a multinational corporation (IBM). The result was a score in each of the dimensions for 40 different countries.

During 1978-83, the Dutch cultural anthropologist Geert Hofstede conducted detailed interviews with hundreds of IBM employees in 53 countries. Through standard statistical analysis of fairly large data sets, he was able to determine patterns of similarities and differences among the replies. From this data analysis, he formulated his theory that world cultures vary along consistent, fundamental dimensions. Since his subjects were constrained to one multinational corporation's world-wide employees, and thus to one company culture, he ascribed their differences to the effects of their national cultures. (One weakness is that he maintained that each country has just one dominant culture.)

In the 1990s, Hofstede published a more accessible version of his research publication in Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind [Hofstede]. His focus was not on defining culture as refinement of the mind (or "highly civilized" attitudes and behavior) but rather on highlighting essential patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting that are well-established by late childhood. These cultural differences manifest themselves in a culture's choices of symbols, heroes/heroines, rituals, and values.

Hofstede identified five dimensions and rated 53 countries on indices for each dimension, normalized to values (usually) of 0 to 100. His five dimensions of culture are the following:

**• Power-distance**

**Power Distance** reflects the degree to which a culture believes how institutional and organizational power should be distributed (equally or unequally) and how the decisions of the power holders should be viewed (challenged or accepted). In other words, people in high power distance cultures are much more comfortable with a larger status differential than low power distance cultures.

***Predictors of Power Distance***:

* **Climate**, measured by geographical latitude. Cultures in high-latitude climate (moderate or cold climates) tend to have low PDI scores. Cultures that have tropical climate tend to have high PDI scores.
* **Population.** Generally, the more people within the culture, the greater the power distance is likely to be.
* **Distribution of Wealth**. The more unequally the wealth is distributed within a culture, the greater the culture's power distance.

**Consequences of Power Distance**: most evident are family customs, the relationships between students and teachers, the young and the elderly, language systems and organizational practices.

**• Collectivism vs. individualism**

**Individualism-Collectivism** describes the degree to which a culture relies on and has allegiance to the self or the group.

**Predictors:**

* **Economic development**. Wealthy cultures tend to be individualistic, whereas poor cultures tend to be collectivistic.
* **Climate**. Cultures in colder climate tend to be individualistic, whereas cultures in warmer climates tend to be collectivistic.

**Note**: Hofstede found a strong negative correlation between a culture's scores on the power distance index and its scores on the individualism-collectivism index. High PDI cultures tend to be collectivistic, whereas low PDI cultures tend to be individualistic.

**Consequences**: Collectivistic cultures tend to be group-oriented, impose a large psychological distance between ingroup and outgroup members and ingroup members are expected to have unquestioning loyalty to their group. In a conflict situation, members of the collectivistic cultures are likely to use avoidance, intermediaries, or other face-saving techniques. Conversely, people in the individualistic cultures do not perceive a large psychological distance between ingroup and outgroup members. They value self-expression, see speaking out as a means of resolving problems, and are likely to use confrontational strategies when dealing with interpersonal problems.

**• Femininity vs. masculinity**

**Masculinity-Femininity (alternative label is achievement-nurturance)** indicates the degree to which a culture values such behaviors as assertiveness, achievement, acquisition of wealth or caring for others, social supports and the quality of life. This dimension tends to draw unwarranted criticism for its name alone. It basically refers expected gender roles in a culture. According to Hofstede, people in high masculinity index (MAS) believe in achievement and ambition, in ostentatious manliness, with very specific behaviors and products associated with male behavior. The cultures that scored towards what Hofstede referred to as "masculine" tend to have very distinct expectations of male and female roles in society.  Low MAS cultures believe less in external achievements and/or manliness, and more in quality of life such as helping others and sympathy for the unfortunate. Feminine cultures also prefer equality between male and female and less prescriptive role behaviors associated with each gender. · The more "feminine" cultures have a greater ambiguity in what is expected of each gender.

**Predictors:**

* Climate. Masculine cultures tend to live in warmer climate near the equator and feminine cultures are likely to locate in colder climates away from the equator.

**Consequences:** Members of high MAS cultures believe that men should be assertive and women should be nurturant. Sex roles are clearly differentiated, and sexual inequality is seen as beneficial. The reverse is true for members in the feminine cultures.

**• Uncertainty avoidance**

**Uncertainty Avoidance** refers to the extent to which a culture feels threatened by ambiguous, uncertain situations and tries to avoid them by establishing more structure. The high positive scores on the uncertainty avoidance index (UAI) indicate low tolerance for ambiguity. These cultures prefer to avoid uncertainty and dissent as a cultural value and desire consensus. As a result, HIGH uncertainty avoidance cultures prefer formal rules and any uncertainty can express itself in higher anxiety than those from low uncertainty avoidance cultures.Cultures with low UAI scores have a high tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity, believe in accepting and encouraging dissenting views among cultural members and in taking risks and trying new things. Thus, cultures which ranked low (compared to other cultures), feel much more comfortable with the unknown.

**Predictors of Uncertainty Avoidance**: No clear-cut predictors. But in general, high UAI cultures tend to be those that are beginning to modernize and are characterized by a high rate of change. Conversely, low UAI cultures tend to have reached the **level of modernization** and have more stable or predictable in their rate of change.

**Consequences:** High UAI cultures tend to develop many rules to control social behaviors. Low UAI cultures need few rules to control social behaviors.

**• Long- vs. short-term orientation**

**Also know as C****onfucian Dynamism - It ranges from long term to orientation to short term orientation.**  
Later work with Bond (see Hofstede & Bond, 1987), produced another dimension meant to explain the rapid economic developement of many Asian countries. This dimension refers to the selective promotion of particular set of ethics found in Confucian teachings. Particular teachings that lead to economic development include thrift, perserverance, a sense of shame, and following a hierarchy. Other Confucian teachings are less emphasized such as tradition, and protecting face.

**Hofstedes' Cultural Dimension Summary**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Country** | **Power Distance** | **Uncertainty Avoidance** | **Individualism** | **Masculinity** | **Confucian Dynamism** |
| Arabic World (ARA) | 80 | 68 | 38 | 52 |  |
| Argentina (ARG) | 49 | 86 | 46 | 56 |  |
| Australia (AUL) | 36 | 51 | 90 | 61 | 31 |
| Austria (AUT) | 11 | 70 | 55 | 79 |  |
| Belgium (BEL) | 65 | 94 | 75 | 54 |  |
| Brazil (BRA) | 69 | 76 | 38 | 49 | 65 |
| Canada (CAN) | 39 | 48 | 80 | 52 | 23 |
| Chile (CHL) | 63 | 86 | 23 | 28 |  |
| Columbia (COL) | 67 | 80 | 13 | 64 |  |
| Costa Rica (COS) | 35 | 86 | 15 | 21 |  |
| Denmark (DEN) | 18 | 23 | 74 | 16 |  |
| Eastern Africa (EAF) | 64 | 52 | 27 | 41 | 25 |
| Ecuador (ECA) | 78 | 67 | 8 | 63 |  |
| Elsalvador (SAL) | 66 | 94 | 19 | 40 |  |
| Finland (FIN) | 33 | 59 | 63 | 26 |  |
| France (FRA) | 68 | 86 | 71 | 43 |  |
| Germany (FRG) | 35 | 65 | 67 | 66 | 31 |
| Great Britain (GBR) | 35 | 35 | 89 | 66 | 25 |
| Greece (GRE) | 60 | 112 | 35 | 57 |  |
| Guatemala (GUA) | 95 | 101 | 6 | 37 |  |
| Hong Kong (HOK) | 68 | 29 | 25 | 57 | 96 |
| India (IND) | 77 | 40 | 48 | 56 | 61 |
| Indonesia (IDO) | 78 | 48 | 14 | 46 |  |
| Iran (IRA) | 58 | 59 | 41 | 43 |  |
| Ireland (IRE) | 28 | 35 | 70 | 68 |  |
| Israel (ISR) | 13 | 81 | 54 | 47 |  |
| Italy (ITA) | 50 | 75 | 76 | 70 |  |
| Jamaica (JAM) | 45 | 13 | 39 | 68 |  |
| Japan (JPN) | 54 | 92 | 46 | 95 | 80 |
| South Korea (KOR) | 60 | 85 | 18 | 39 | 75 |
| Malaysia (MAL) | 104 | 36 | 26 | 50 |  |
| Mexico (MEX) | 81 | 82 | 30 | 69 |  |
| Netherlands (NET) | 38 | 53 | 80 | 14 | 44 |
| New Zealand (NZI) | 22 | 49 | 79 | 58 | 30 |
| Norway (NOR) | 31 | 50 | 69 | 8 |  |
| Pakistan (PAK) | 55 | 70 | 14 | 50 | 0 |
| Panama (PAN) | 95 | 86 | 11 | 44 |  |
| Peru (PER) | 64 | 87 | 16 | 42 |  |
| Philippines (PHI) | 94 | 44 | 32 | 64 | 19 |
| Portugal (POR) | 63 | 104 | 27 | 31 |  |
| Russia (RUS) | 90 | 70 | 42 | 37 |  |
| Singapore (SIN) | 74 | 8 | 20 | 48 | 48 |
| South Africa (SAF) | 49 | 49 | 65 | 63 |  |
| Spain (SPA) | 57 | 86 | 51 | 42 |  |
| Sweden (SWE) | 31 | 29 | 71 | 5 | 33 |
| Switzerland (SWI) | 34 | 58 | 68 | 70 |  |
| Taiwan (TAI) | 58 | 69 | 17 | 45 | 87 |
| Thailand (THA) | 64 | 64 | 20 | 34 | 56 |
| Turkey (TUR) | 66 | 85 | 37 | 45 |  |
| United States (USA) | 40 | 46 | 91 | 62 | 29 |
| Uruguay (URU) | 61 | 100 | 36 | 38 |  |
| Venezuela (VEN) | 81 | 76 | 12 | 73 |  |
| West Africa (WAF) | 77 | 54 | 20 | 46 | 16 |

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**Assignment:**

Research the culture of the country you selected and discuss how the culture compares to the United States and discuss how your selected country compares to that of the United States along each of Hofstede's dimensions (excluding Confucian Dynamism). Rather than simply comparing the scores, give evidence of elements of the foreign country's culture that would exemplify its Hofstede's score. Focus your report on the observed DIFFERENCES between the  foreign culture and the U.S., rather than explanations of the US culture.