

## Personality and culture revisited

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Hofstede's study of national culture differences used a database collected by a multinational corporation (IBM) in its subsidiaries in 71 countries, containing the scores on a series of employee attitude surveys held between 1967 and 1973, a total of around 117,000 questionnaires. These surveys had explicitly tried to tap the employees' basic values along with their situational attitudes. IBM in those days was a tightly structured organization with a unified set of products and product-related jobs and a strong corporate culture, meaning that samples of employees from one subsidiary to another could be strictly matched to be similar in all respects except nationality. The questionnaires were administered in one of 20 languages, with minor adaptations to local idiom (e.g., Austrian, Swiss, and mainstream German). Data analyzed were mean scores for identically stratified samples of employees within each of those 40 countries for which the number of employees was judged sufficiently large to allow reliable comparison. In addition, the database contained the results of two successive survey rounds four years apart, and only those questions were retained for analysis for which the ordering of countries over this period remained significantly constant, eliminating short-term effects. The successive identification of four dimensions of national culture in this material has been described in Hofstede (1980, 2001). In a factor analysis of country data, three orthogonal factors were found; two dimensions (power distance and individualism) were significantly correlated and initially formed one factor, but their relationship all but disappeared after national wealth (GNP per capita) was controlled for. The four dimensions, as they were interpreted based on the original survey questions and on correlated results from the IBM and other studies, are

1. *Power distance*, that is, the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions (such as the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. This represents inequality (more versus less) but is 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, and anybody with some international experience will be aware that "all societies are unequal, but some are more unequal than others." A society's power distance level is bred in its families through the extent to which its children are socialized toward obedience or toward initiative.
2. *Uncertainty avoidance* 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, and different than usual. Uncertainty-avoiding cultures try to minimize the possibility of such situations by strict laws and rules, by safety and security measures, and, on the philosophical and religious level, by a belief in absolute Truth: "There can only be one Truth and we have it." People in uncertainty-avoiding countries are also more emotional and are 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 as few rules as possible, and on the philosophical and religious level

they are relativist and allow many currents to flow side by side. People within these cultures are more phlegmatic and contemplative, and are not expected by their environment to express emotions. Uncertainty avoidance is related to (and correlated with) the level of cultural anxiety or neuroticism as measured in the studies by Lynn (1971) and Lynn and Hampson (1975; see Hofstede, 2001, p. 188).

3. *Individualism* versus its opposite, collectivism, refers to the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups. In individualist societies, the ties between individuals are loose: Everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family. In collectivist societies, people are integrated from birth onward into strong, cohesive in-groups, often extended families (with uncles, aunts, and grandparents), protecting them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty. The word collectivism in this sense has no political meaning: It refers to the group, not to the state.
4. *Masculinity* versus its opposite, femininity, refers to the distribution of emotional roles between the sexes, another fundamental problem 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; and (b) men's values vary along a dimension from very assertive and competitive and maximally different from women's values on 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 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.

A theoretical justification for these dimensions—detected after the dimensions had been empirically identified—was found in an extensive review article about national character and modal personality by the U.S. sociologist Alex Inkeles and psychologist Daniel Levinson, originally published in 1954, extended in 1969 (1954/ 1969), and reprinted in Inkeles (1997). Summarizing a large number of anthropological and sociological studies, they identified the following "standard analytic issues":

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

Inkeles and Levinson's (1954/1969) standard analytic issues are amazingly similar to the dimensions found in the IBM database: Power distance relates to the first, uncertainty avoidance to the third, and individualism and masculinity both relate to the second standard analytic issue. This correspondence suggests that the IBM Study dimensions are not an arbitrary collection of factors that happened to emerge from a particular set of items; instead, they seem to reflect the basic dimensions of culture from the perspective of value systems. The comprehensiveness of these four dimensions is supported by research comparing them to other measured value systems (Hofstede, 2001, pp. 92-96, 158-159, 220-225, 296-297, 355-358; Smith & Schwartz, 1997, pp. 102-104).

The relative positions of the 40 countries on the four dimensions were expressed in scores between (approximately) 0 and 100. Afterward, additional scores were obtained for 10 more countries and 3

regions in the IBM Study, and estimates on the basis of other information were published for another 16 countries and regions (Hofstede, 2001, pp. 500-502). Power distance scores are high for Latin, Asian, and African countries and smaller for Germanic countries. Uncertainty avoidance scores are higher in Latin countries, in Japan, and in German-speaking countries, and they are lower in Anglo, Nordic, and Chinese-culture countries. Individualism prevails in developed and Western countries, whereas collectivism prevails in less developed and Eastern countries; Japan takes a middle position on this dimension. Masculinity is high in Japan and in some European countries such as Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, and is moderately high in Anglo countries; it is low in Nordic countries and in the Netherlands and is moderately low in some Latin and Asian countries like France, Spain, and Thailand.

Since *Culture's Consequences* first appeared in 1980, many studies have administered the IBM questionnaire (or parts of it, or its later and improved versions) on other populations. Four major replications (covering 14 or more countries) were described in Hofstede (2001); two more have appeared since then (Mouritzen & Svava, 2002; van Nimwegen, 2002). Correlations of the country scores computed from the replications with the original IBM scores do not tend to become weaker over time. This supports the claim that the IBM dimension scores tapped resilient aspects of national culture differences.

Most of Hofstede's 1980 book was devoted to validating the four dimensions against other conceptually related data about the countries. For example, power distance was correlated with the use of violence in domestic politics and with income inequality in a country. Uncertainty avoidance was associated with Roman Catholicism and with the legal obligation in developed countries for citizens to carry identity cards. Individualism was correlated with national wealth (GNP per capita) and with mobility between social classes from one generation to the next. Masculinity was correlated negatively with the share of GNP that governments of wealthy countries spent on development assistance to the Third World. In the second edition of *Culture's Consequences* (Hofstede, 2001), the number of validations has grown explosively (pp. 503- 520), including correlations with Schwartz's values study, with many World Values Survey questions, and with consumer behavior data from market research (de Mooij, 2004). Again, among the various validating comparisons, correlations do not tend to become weaker over time. The IBM national dimension scores (or at least their relative positions) do seem to have remained as valid in the 1990s as they were around 1970.

In the 1980s, a fifth dimension was added to the four, long-term versus short-term orientation. This dimension was based on a study among students in 23 countries around the world, using a questionnaire designed by Chinese scholars (Hofstede & 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." To date, scores on the fifth dimension are only available for part of the countries covered by the first four. In the present article, it will play no role.