⊟ Topic Page: [Hofstede, Geert H.](#)

Definition: **Hofstede, Geert** from *The AMA Dictionary of Business and Management*

Dutch business executive and consultant who investigated the interaction between culture and business in transnational settings.

Summary Article: **Hofstede, Geert (1928–)**
From *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Race, Ethnicity and Nationalism*

cultural diversity

culture

ethnicity

Image from: **[The environmental movement's popular use of...](#)** in *[Encyclopedia of Environment and Society](#)*

Hofstede's work on national culture remains some of the most influential evidence of the existence of national culture. This entry discusses Hofstede's work, specifically his analysis of data from IBM multinational subsidiaries worldwide and his evidence that countries can be distinguished along five national cultural dimensions. Each of the cultural dimensions is discussed. The entry also discusses the many criticisms of Hofstede's work. The entry concludes that, despite serious criticisms and new national culture frameworks, Hofstede's pioneering work will likely for a long time remain one of the most significant contributions to understanding how countries differ based on national cultures.

HOFSTEDE, NATIONAL CULTURE, AND NATIONAL CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

Geert Hofstede, a Dutch social psychologist, became famous for his pioneering research that provided strong evidence that countries differ on national cultural values. Working as a management trainer at IBM, Hofstede initiated the collection of data from 116,000 employees located in IBM subsidiaries in seventy-two countries (Kirkman, Lowe, and Gibson 2006). Hofstede reduced the original number of countries to forty by only considering those countries that had fifty or more responses. Defining culture as "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another," Hofstede (1980: 25) found that these forty countries could be classified along four dimensions of national culture. A later expansion to the database added ten more countries and three more regions (Arab countries, and East and West Africa). In his analysis of the employee responses, Hofstede found that four factors emerged from the data, namely individualism–collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity–femininity. Individualism–collectivism refers to the degree to which societal members place an emphasis on the relationship between themselves and the collective (Hofstede 1980). In more individualist societies, societal members are expected to be more free from the social norms of the collective. In contrast, more collectivist societies expect society members to be more interconnected and to have stronger expectations to abide by collective norms.

Power distance refers to the degree to which "a society accepts the fact that power in institutions and organizations is distributed unequally" (Hofstede 1980: 45). High-power-distance societies typically respect authoritarian constraints, status differences, and hierarchy. In contrast, low-power-distance societies are more likely to challenge social constraints and authoritative patterns. Uncertainty

avoidance examines the extent to which "a society feels threatened by uncertain or ambiguous situations and tries to avoid these situations by providing greater career stability, establishing more formal rules, not tolerating deviant ideas, and believing in absolute truths" (Hofstede 1980: 45). High-uncertainty societies are thus more likely to establish rules and social norms to reduce the level of uncertainty. Finally, masculinity—femininity refers to the degree to which the dominant values in societies are considered masculine or feminine (Hofstede 1980). Masculine values include assertiveness and aggressiveness, and focus on material achievement. In contrast, Hofstede (2001) argued that societies at the other end of the masculinity continuum display feminine characteristics such as caring for others and emphasis on quality of life.

Although Hofstede (1980) originally identified four dimensions, he later developed a fifth dimension based on his work with Bond on student responses from a large Chinese sample. The long-term-orientation dimension is based on long-term versus short-term aspects of Confucian thinking (Hofstede 2001). Societies with long-term orientation tend to value persistence and thrift while short-term-orientation societies value respect for tradition and personal stability.

HOFSTEDE'S WORK: CRITICISMS AND RESPONSES

Despite its popularity and pervasiveness, Hofstede's work has received significant criticisms (McSweeney 2002; Sivakumar and Nakata 2001). First, McSweeney notes that Hofstede's dimensions were determined on the basis of responses from IBM marketing employees. This is considered problematic for several reasons. For some of the countries under consideration, Hofstede had samples of employees as low as thirty-seven. McSweeney (2002) contests whether such a small sample size can be representative of a population. Furthermore, McSweeney also questions whether surveys are really the most appropriate ways to measure culture. Additionally, some have questioned whether it is appropriate to determine culture based on marketing employees from a single multinational. A second criticism of Hofstede's work is centered on his assumptions that cultures can be separated into distinct and noninteracting forms (organizational, occupational, and national). McSweeney notes that these different aspects of culture are likely to interact and are therefore not necessarily distinct. Research has indeed shown that accountants may actually be more impacted by their occupational cultures than by their national cultures (Parboteeah et al. 2005). A third criticism of Hofstede's work is based on his assumption that a national culture is common to all national individuals. Analysis of Hofstede's data has revealed that there were significant within-country differences on some cultural dimensions, thereby suggesting that the data may not always be as homogeneous as assumed. Finally, McSweeney and others (Sivakumar and Nakata 2001) have also suggested that the data collected from IBM are old and therefore outdated. Furthermore, another criticism is that Hofstede's data assume that culture is static and does not "capture the malleability of culture over time" (Kirkman, Lowe, and Gibson 2006: 286).

In response, Hofstede wrote an article to debunk these criticisms (Hofstede 2002). He noted that, although there is some validity to some of the criticisms, the field has not seen any better alternative to measuring national cultures. For instance, he counters that, although measuring national cultures using data from only one multinational company may not be the best way to measure national cultures, it still does effectively control for other potential effects on national cultural values and thus provides "the only kind of units available for comparison and [is] better than nothing" (Hofstede 2002: 1355).

CONCLUSION

Hofstede's work remains one of the most popular ways to conceptualize national cultures. Although he was not the first scholar to understand the importance of national cultural values (Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck 1961) and despite more recent frameworks (the GLOBE project has proposed an alternative national culture framework heavily based on Hofstede's work; House et al. 2004), Hofstede's framework has stood the test of time and "in spite of criticism, researchers have favored this five dimension framework because of its clarity, parsimony and resonance with managers" (Kirkman, Lowe, and Gibson 2006: 286). Furthermore, although recent scholarship has expanded the cross-national understanding of phenomena (e.g., Parboteeah, Hoegl, and Cullen 2008), Hofstede's work remains the fundamental basis through which these new perspectives are considered. It will therefore likely remain influential in the field in the future.

SEE ALSO: Cultural Relativism; Organizational Performance and Diversity; Power

REFERENCES

- Hofstede, Geert. 1980a. Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work Related Values. SAGE Beverly Hills CA.
- Hofstede, Geert. 1980b. "Motivation, Leadership, and Organization Theories: Do American Theories Apply Abroad?" Organizational Dynamics 9: 142-63.
- Hofstede, Geert. 2001. Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations across Nations. SAGE Thousand Oaks CA.
- Hofstede, Geert. 2002. "Dimensions Do Not Exist: A Reply to Brendan McSweeney." Human Relations 55: 1355-61.
- House, Robert J.; Paul J. Hanges; Mansour Javidan; Peter W. Dorfman; Vipin Gupta. 2004. Culture, Leadership, and Organizations. SAGE Thousand Oaks CA.
- Kirkman, Bradley L.; Kevin B. Lowe; Cristina B. Gibson. 2006. "A Quarter Century of Culture's Consequences: A Review of Empirical Research Incorporating Hofstede's Cultural Values Framework." Journal of International Business Studies 37: 285-320.
- Kluckhohn, Florence; Fred L. Strodtbeck. 1961. Variations in Value Orientations. Row, Peterson Evanston IL.
- McSweeney, Brendan. 2002. "Hofstede's Model of National Cultural Differences and Their Consequences: A Triumph of Faith—a Failure of Analysis." Human Relations 55(1): 89-118.
- Parboteeah, K. Praveen; John B. Cullen; Bart Victor; Tomoaki Sakano. 2005. "Does National Culture Affect the Development of Ethical Climates? A Comparison of US and Japanese Accountants." Management International Review 45(4): 1-23.
- Parboteeah, K. Praveen; Martin Hoegl; John B. Cullen. 2008. "Managers' Gender Role Attitudes: A Country Institutional Profile Approach." Journal of International Business Studies 39: 795-813.
- Sivakumar, K.; Cheryl Nakata. 2001. "The Stampede toward Hofstede's Framework: Avoiding the Sample Design Pit in Cross-cultural Research." Journal of International Business Studies 32(3): 555-74.

K. PRAVEEN PARBOTEEAH
University of Wisconsin–Whitewater USA
KYUNG-IL HAN
Anyang University South Korea
CHUNG-WEN CHEN
National Taiwan University of Science and Technology Taiwan

APA

Chicago

Harvard

MLA

Praveen Parboteeah, K., Han, K., & Chen, C. (2016). Hofstede, Geert (1928--). In J. Stone, R. M. Dennis, P. Rizova, & . (Eds.), *The Wiley Blackwell encyclopedia of race, ethnicity, and nationalism.* Hoboken, NJ: Wiley. Retrieved from https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/hofstede_geert_h

APA

Praveen Parboteeah, K., Han, K., & Chen, C. (2016). Hofstede, Geert (1928--). In J. Stone, R. M. Dennis, P. Rizova, & . (Eds.), *The Wiley Blackwell encyclopedia of race, ethnicity, and nationalism*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley. Retrieved from https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/hofstede_geert_h

Chicago

Praveen Parboteeah, K., Kyung-il Han, and Chung-Wen Chen. "Hofstede, Geert (1928–)." In *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Race, Ethnicity and Nationalism*, edited by John Stone, Rutledge M. Dennis, Polly Rizova, and .. Wiley, 2016. https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/hofstede_geert_h

Harvard

Praveen Parboteeah, K., Han, K. and Chen, C. (2016). Hofstede, Geert (1928--). In J. Stone, R.M. Dennis, P. Rizova & . (Eds.), *The Wiley Blackwell encyclopedia of race, ethnicity, and nationalism*. [Online]. Hoboken: Wiley. Available from: https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/hofstede_geert_h [Accessed 18 October 2019].

MLA

Praveen Parboteeah, K., et al. "Hofstede, Geert (1928–)." *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Race, Ethnicity and Nationalism*, edited by John Stone, et al., Wiley, 1st edition, 2016. *Credo Reference*, https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/hofstede_geert_h. Accessed 18 Oct. 2019.