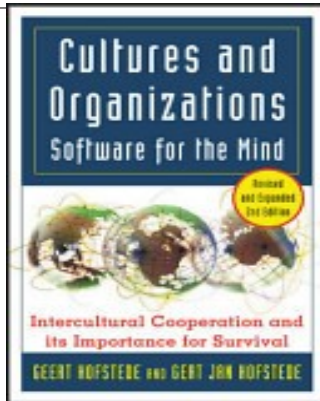


# Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind

Submitted by Longmei Wu

By **GEERT HOFSTEDE AND  
GERT JAN HOFSTEDE**



## SUMMARY

Cultures have penetrated in every corner of our societies. Like software to computers, culture works as the mental software for humans, which play a significant role in forming our ways of feeling, thinking, and acting. Generally speaking, Culture is learned and experienced by individuals in the family, at school, and in the workplace.

In the globe sense, cultures differ from nations and regions. The authors elaborate the cultural differences or diversity between nations from different dimensions, based on empirical researches. Through these dimensions, we can understand how national cultures work as the mental programming and

why people from different countries may have social misunderstanding, or even conflicts.

Concentrating on organizations, the configurations and managing of organizations are also affected by the national cultures. Nevertheless, organizational cultures have their own characteristics and dimensions.

Lastly, the authors discuss the key conceptions of intercultural dynamics and provide the insightful and sincere advice for individuals and organizations to help them build and improve intercultural communication and cooperation.

## Inside this Summary

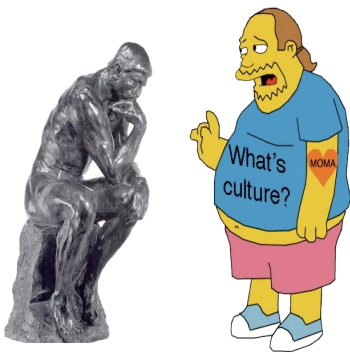
Summary	1
Raise the Issue - Culture	2
Dimension 1-Power distance	3
Dimension 2- collectivism vs. individualism	4
Dimension 3-Femininity vs. Masculinity	5
Dimension 4- Uncertainty Avoidance	6
Organization and organizational cultures	7
Implication and Critical evaluation	8

### *About the authors*

**Geert Hofstede: Ph.D. in social psychology, a professor emeritus of Organizational Anthropology and International Management at Maastricht University, The Netherlands.**

**Gert Jan Hofstede: a professor of Information Systems at Wageningen University and the son of Geert Hofstede.**

## Culture — the software of the mind



Every person carries him- or herself patterns of thinking, feeling, and potential acting that were learned throughout their lifetime. Using the analogy of the way computers are programmed, this book will call such patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting *mental programs*, or *software of mind*.

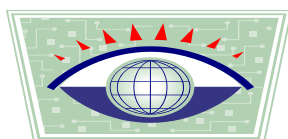
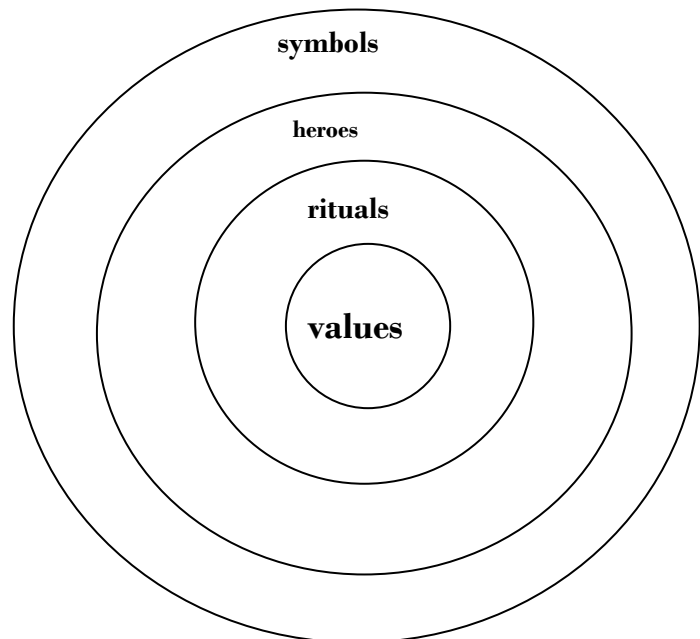
A customary term for such mental software is *culture*. The sources of one's mental programs lie within the social environment in which one grew up and collected one's life experiences.

Culture consists of the unwritten rules of the social game. It is *the collective programming* of the mind that distinguishing the members of a group or category of people from others. (p.3)

### The "onion":

Manifestations  
of Culture at Dif-  
ferent Levels of  
Depth

*NB: symbols, he-  
roes, rituals belong  
to Practices.*



“Cultural relativism affirms that one culture has no absolute criteria for judging the activities of another culture as ‘low’ or ‘noble’.”

— Claude Lèvi-Strauss

## Dimension 1—Power distance

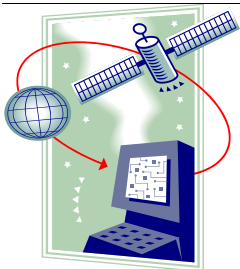
### Measuring the degree of inequality in Society: the power distance index

PD reflects the range of answers found in the various countries to the basic question of how to handle the fact that people are unequal.

**C** **Definition:** Power distance can be defined as the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that

### Key Difference between Small— and Large-Power-distance Societies: *General Norm, Family ,and School*

SMALL POWER DISTANCE	LAGE POWER DISTANCE
Inequalities should be minimized.	Inequalities are expected and desired.
There should be interdependence between less and more powerful people.	Less powerful people should be dependent; they are polarized between dependence and counter-dependence.
Parents treat children as equals.	Parents teach children obedience.
Children play no role in old-age security of parents.	Children are a source of old-age security to parents.
Teachers expect initiative from students in class.	Teachers take initiative in class.
Quality of learning depends on two-way communication and excellence of students.	Quality of learning depends on excellence of teacher.
Educational policy focuses on secondary schools.	Educational policy focuses on university.



介绍照片或图形的题注。



*The questionnaire survey was conducted to employees from more than fifty countries around the world who worked in the local subsidiaries of the large multinational corporation : IBM*

Power Distance Difference between countries reflects in role pairs of *parent-child, teacher-student, boss-subordinate, and authority-citizen*

As the aphorism goes, "Power tends to corruption, and absolute power corrupts absolutely."

## Dimension 2—collectivism vs. individualism

Measuring the degree of individualism in society—

### individualism and collectivism



**Definition:** *Individualism* pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family. *Collectivism* as its opposite pertains to societies in which people from birth onward are integrated into strong and cohesive in-groups, which throughout people's lifetimes continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty. (p.76)

#### Collectivism vs. PD

*Negative correlated:*

large-power-distance countries are also likely to be more collectivist, and small-power-distance countries to be more individualist

### Key differences between Collectivist and Individualist Societies: *Languages, Personality, and behavior*

COLLECTIVIST	INDIVIDUALIST
Use of the word <i>I</i> is avoided.	Use of the word <i>I</i> is encouraged.
On personality test, people score more introvert.	On personality test, people score more extrovert.
Showing sadness is encouraged, and happiness discouraged.	Showing happiness is encouraged, and sadness discouraged.
Slower walking speed.	Faster walking speed.
Social network is the primary source of information.	Media is the primary source of information.
A smaller share of both private and public income is spent on health care.	A larger share of both private and public income is spent on health care.

### Key differences between Collectivist and Individualist Societies: *School and the Workplace*

COLLECTIVIST	INDIVIDUALIST
Students only speak up in class when selected by group.	Students are expected to individually speak up in class.
The purpose of education is learning how to do.	The purpose of education is learning how to learn.
Occupational mobility is lower.	Occupational mobility is higher.
Direct appraisal of subordinates spoils harmony.	Management training teaches the honest sharing of feelings.



## Dimension 3—Femininity vs. Masculinity

### Gender roles

Men, in short, are supposed to be assertive, competitive, and tough. Women are more concerned to be taking care of the home, of the children, and of people in general—take the tender roles. (p.117)

**Definition:** A society is called *masculine* when emotional gender roles are clearly distinct: men are supposed to be assertive, tough, and focused on material success, whereas women are supposed to be more modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life. (p.120)

### Key Differences between Feminine and Masculine Societies: *General Norm and Family*

FEMININE	MASCULINE
Relationships and quality of life are important.	Challenge, earnings, recognition, and advancement are important.
Both men and women should be modest.	Men should be assertive, ambitious, and tough.
In the family both fathers and mothers deal with facts and feelings.	In the family fathers deal with facts, and mothers with feelings.
Boys and girls play for the same reasons.	Boys play to compete, girls to be together.



### Key Differences between Feminine and Masculine Societies: *Education and Consumer Behavior*

FEMININE	MASCULINE
Average student is the norm; praise for weak students.	Best student is the norm; praise for excellent students.
Falling in school is a minor incident.	Falling in school is a disaster.
Women and men teach young children.	Women teach young children.
Couples share one car.	Couples need two cars.
More products for the home are sold.	More status products are sold.

## Dimension 4— Uncertainty Avoidance

Some cultures are more anxious than others. Anxious cultures tend to be expressive cultures. In weak uncertainty avoidance countries, anxiety levels are relatively low. Aggression and emotions are not supposed to be shown. (p.171)



**Definition:** *Uncertainty avoidance* is the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations. (p.167)

### Key differences between Weak and Strong Uncertainty Avoidance Societies: General Norm and Family

WEAK UA	STRONG UA
Low stress and low anxiety.	High stress and high anxiety.
Aggression and emotions should not be shown.	Aggression and emotions should be shown according to situations.
In personality tests, higher scores on agreeableness.	In personality tests, higher scores on neuroticism.
What is different is curious.	What is different is dangerous.
Family life is relaxed.	Family life is stressful.

### Key differences between Weak and Strong Uncertainty Avoidance Societies: Health, Education, and Shopping

WEAK UA	STRONG UA
People feel happy.	People feel less happy.
There are more nurses but few doctors.	There are more doctors but few nurses.
Teachers may say “I don’t know”.	Teachers are supposed to have all the answers.
In shopping the research is for convenience.	In shopping the research is for purity and cleanliness.
Risky investments.	Conservative investments.

## Dimension 3—Femininity vs. Masculinity

### Implicit models of Organizations

the pyramid,  
the machine,  
the market,  
and the family.

They are base on the dimensions of power distance and uncertainty distance respectively. Models: the pyramid, the machine, the market, and the family.



who has the power  
to decide “what”?

what rules or proce-  
dures will be fol-  
lowed to attain the  
desired ends?

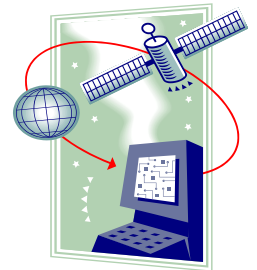
## organizational cultures



*Six dimensions of organizational cultures (from practices, not values)*

Process oriented vs. results oriented;  
Employee oriented vs. job oriented;  
Parochial vs. professional;  
Open system vs. closed system;  
Loose control vs. tight control;

*The Institute for Research on Intercultural Cooperation (IRIC) used the cross-national IBM studies as a model. As a complement to the cross-national study, it was cross-organizational: instead of covering on corporation in a number of countries, it covered a number of different organizations in two countries, Denmark and the Netherlands, which scored fairly similar on the IBM study dimensions. (p. 286)*



## Implications and conclusion

### Intercultural Encounters

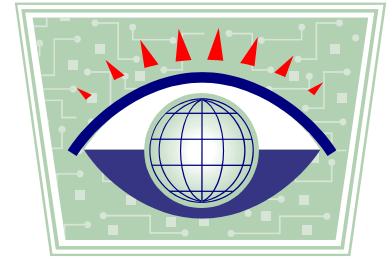
Culture shock

Ethnocentrism and xenophilia

Group encounters: auto- and heterostereotypes

### Multinational Business Organization

(The functioning of multinational business organizations hinges on intercultural communication and cooperation. )



## Critical Evaluation

This a book provoking the revolutionary study of how the place where we grew up influences the way of our thoughts, feelings and action, which provide the readership a profound and brand-new perspective of the word under globalization.

It embraces a variety of elements of cultures and organizations across different nations and spheres of life.

Arranged in a very logic and clear way. Although it is not a light book to read, according to the length of the content, it, indeed, attracts the reader to keep on reading for the inspiring topics and perceptions, which, of course, rewards you so much more.

---

### *References:*

*Hofstede, Geert H.. (2005) Cultures and organizations: software of the mind.*

*ISBN 0-07-143959-5*