

Cultures and Organizations

Software of the mind

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Preface

In the late 1960s I accidentally became interested in cultural differences—and gained access to rich data for studying them. This study resulted in the publication in 1980 of a book on the subject, *Culture's Consequences*. It was written for a scholarly public; it had to be, because it cast doubts on the universal validity of established theories in psychology, organization sociology, and management theory: so I had to show the theoretical reasoning, base data, and statistical treatments used to reach the conclusions. A 1984 paperback edition of the book left out the base data and the statistics but was otherwise identical to the 1980 hardcover version.

Culture's Consequences appeared at a time when interest in cultural differences, both between nations and between organizations, was rapidly rising, and there was a dearth of empirically supported information on the subject. As far as differences among nations were concerned the earlier book certainly provided such information, but maybe too much of it at once. Many readers evidently only read parts of the message. For example, I lost count of the number of people who cited the book claiming that I studied the values of IBM (or 'Hermes') *managers*. The data I used were from IBM *employees* and that, as the book itself showed, makes quite a difference.

The theme of cultural differences is, of course, not only and even not primarily of interest to social scientists or international business students. It concerns anyone who meets people from outside his or her own narrow circle, and in the modern world that is virtually everybody. This new book does what should have been done earlier: it addresses itself to any interested reader. It avoids social scientific jargon where possible and explains it where necessary; a glossary is added for this purpose.

Reformulating the message of *Culture's Consequences* after 10 years has made it possible to include the results of more recent research by others and by myself, including research on differences in organizational cultures. Since 1980 many people have published important studies on cultural differences. The second half of the book is almost entirely based on new material. I am particularly indebted to Michael Bond in Hong Kong and to Michael Hoppe in Chapel Hill NC, USA who through their work stimulated my thinking in fundamental ways. Another debt is to the collaborators in the IRIC research project on organization cultures in Denmark and the Netherlands: the key people were Denise Ohayv in Copenhagen and Geert Sanders and Bram Neuijen in Groningen. The inventive mind of Bob Waisfisz, management consultant in The Hague, was a permanent source of

PREFACE

Inspiration: he let me share his tremendous experience in ways of teaching practice-oriented people about culture; he also commented on a draft version of the manuscript. John W. Bing, Rene Olie, Louise Pannenburg-Heim, Hein Schreuder, and Gert Van de Paal also helped me greatly by reading and commenting on draft versions of the book.

In contrast to the earlier books there are no secretaries to be complimented for conscientious typing. I composed the manuscript on a personal computer, leaving the secretaries to more important tasks. Both the secretaries and I enjoy the new technology and I even suspect that it increases my creativity.

A panel of informants, discussion partners, and benevolent critics for ideas during the book's gestation period the members of the Hofstede family: Maaïke, Josephie, Gert-Jan, Rokus, Bart, and Gideon have all contributed. Since the discussions at the family dinner table at the time of *Culture's Consequences*, they have all become professionals in their own fields. Our common interest in cultural differences has remained, and they have again been a source of support both at the intellectual and at the personal level. I think of them all with love and gratitude.

This book is dedicated to our grandchildren Liesbeth and Bregje Hofstede and to the children that may yet be born. The world we are now passing on to their generation is full of clashes between differently programmed minds. Liesbeth and Bregje will not like the book now because it has no nice pictures. I am sorry about that; but I hope it will contribute a little bit to mutual understanding across cultures in tomorrow's world which is theirs.

GEERT HOFSTEDE
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A guide through this book

This book consists of four parts. Part I lays the foundation for a good understanding of the remainder of the book by explaining what we mean when we talk about 'culture', and by providing a small vocabulary of essential terms to be used in the following parts.

Part II, by far the largest part, consists of Chapters 2 through 7 and deals with differences among cultures at *national level*. Chapters 2 through 5 describe the four dimensions empirically found in research across more than 50 countries: to wit power distance, collectivism versus individualism, femininity versus masculinity, and uncertainty avoidance. Each of these chapters is composed in the same way: the dimension is described, the scores of the various countries are shown, and the consequences of the dimension for family life, school, workplace, organization, state, and the development of ideas are discussed. Speculatively, something is said about the origins and the possible future of differences along each dimension. Differences according to gender, generation, and social class are brought in wherever they are relevant.

Chapter 6 looks at the consequences of national culture differences in the way people in a country organize themselves, combining the dimensions described in the four previous chapters. It shows that organizational practices and theories are culturally dependent.

Chapter 7 brings in the fifth cross-national dimension: long-term versus short-term orientation. It also explores the implications of the fact that this dimension could only be detected with a questionnaire designed by the Chinese; it reveals deep differences between Eastern and Western thinking related to the importance of 'virtue' versus 'truth'.

Part III deals with *organizational culture differences*, and consists of one single chapter: Chapter 8. It describes the new insights collected in IRIC's research project across 20 organizational units in Denmark and the Netherlands conducted in the period 1985-1987. These are complementary to the national culture differences illustrated in the earlier chapters.

Part IV deals with the *practical implications* of the culture differences and similarities described so far. Chapter 9 looks at what happens when people from different cultures meet. It treats phenomena such as culture shock, ethnocentrism, stereotyping, differences in language and in humor. It refers to intercultural encounters in tourism, schools, development cooperation,

international negotiations, and joint business ventures. It discusses how intercultural communication skills can be developed. Chapter 10 summarizes the message of the book and translates it into suggestions for parents, managers, and the media. It also speculates about political developments in the coming years, on the basis of cultural processes.

Practitioners can stop reading the book here. A final section entitled *Reading Mental Programs* is mainly addressed at research colleagues and is added as an appendix. It deals with how to collect reliable information about cultural differences. It also refers to controversies within the social sciences around the subject of culture, and explains the methodological choices behind the approach followed.

Practitioners may benefit, however, from the glossary which follows the appendix, in which the scientific terms used in the book are listed each with a brief explanation. Finally, there is a literature reference list, a name index, and a subject index; the latter includes references to the glossary.

Part I

Introduction

1

Levels of culture

11th juror: (*rising*) 'I beg pardon, in discussing . . .'

10th juror: (*interrupting and mimicking*) 'I beg pardon. What are you so goddam polite about?'

11th juror: (*looking straight at the 10th juror*) 'For the same reason you're not. It's the way I was brought up.'

From Reginald Rose, *Twelve Angry Men*

Twelve Angry Men is an American theatre piece which became a famous motion picture, starring Henry Fonda. The play was written in 1955. The scene consists of the jury room of a New York court of law. Twelve jury members who have never met before have to decide unanimously on the guilt or innocence of a boy from a slum area, accused of murder. The quote above is from the second and final act when emotions have reached boiling point. It is a confrontation between the tenth juror, a garage owner, and the eleventh juror, a European-born, probably Austrian, watchmaker. The tenth juror is irritated by what he sees as the excessively polite manners of the other man. But the watchmaker cannot behave otherwise. After many years in his new home country, he still behaves the way he was raised. He carries within himself an indelible pattern of behavior.

Different minds but common problems

The world is full of confrontations between people, groups, and nations who think, feel, and act differently. At the same time these people, groups, and nations, just like our twelve angry men are exposed to common problems which demand cooperation for their solution. Ecological, economical, military, hygienic, and meteorological developments do not stop at national or regional borders. Coping with the threats of nuclear warfare, acid rain, ocean pollution, extinction of animals, AIDS, or a worldwide recession demands cooperation of opinion leaders from many countries. They in their turn need the support of broad groups of followers in order to implement the decisions taken.

Understanding the differences in the ways these leaders and their followers think, feel, and act is a condition for bringing about worldwide solutions that work. Questions of economic, technological, medical, or biological cooperation have too often been considered as merely technical. One of the reasons why so many solutions do not work or cannot be implemented is because differences in thinking among the partners have been ignored. Understanding such differences is at least as essential as understanding the technical factors.

The objective of this book is to help in dealing with the differences in thinking, feeling, and acting of people around the globe. It will show that although the variety in people's minds is enormous, there is a structure in this variety which can serve as a basis for mutual understanding.

Culture as mental programming

Every person carries within him or herself patterns of thinking, feeling, and potential acting which were learned throughout their lifetime. Much of it has been acquired in early childhood, because at that time a person is most susceptible to learning and assimilating. As soon as certain patterns of thinking, feeling and acting have established themselves within a person's mind, (s)he must unlearn these before being able to learn something different, and unlearning is more difficult than learning for the first time.

Using the analogy of the way in which computers are programmed, this book will call such patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting *mental programs*, or, as the sub-title goes: '*software of the mind*'. This does not mean, of course, that people are programmed the way computers are. A person's behavior is only partially predetermined by her or his mental programs: (s)he has a basic ability to deviate from them, and to react in ways which are new, creative, destructive, or unexpected. The '*software of the mind*' this book is about only indicates what reactions are likely and understandable, given one's past.

The sources of one's mental programs lie within the social environments in which one grew up and collected one's life experiences. The programming starts within the family; it continues within the neighborhood, at school, in youth groups, at the work place, and in the living community. The European watchmaker from the quote at the beginning of this chapter came from a country and a social class in which polite behavior is still at a premium today. Most people from that environment would have reacted as he did. The American garage owner, who worked himself up from the slums, acquired quite different mental programs. Mental programs vary as much as the social environments in which they were acquired.

A customary term for such mental software is *culture*. This word has several meanings, all derived from its Latin source, which refers to the tilling of the

soil. In most Western languages 'culture' commonly means 'civilization' or 'refinement of the mind' and in particular the results of such refinement, like education, art, and literature. This is 'culture in the narrow sense'; I sometimes call it 'culture one'. Culture as mental software, however, corresponds to a much broader use of the word which is common among social anthropologists: this is 'culture two', and it is the concept which will be used throughout this book.

Social (or cultural) anthropology is the science of human societies, in particular (although not only) traditional or 'primitive' ones. In social anthropology, 'culture' is a catchword for all those patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting referred to in the previous paragraphs. Not only those activities supposed to refine the mind are included in 'culture two', but also the ordinary and menial things in life: greeting, eating, showing or not showing feelings, keeping a certain physical distance from others, making love, or maintaining body hygiene. Politicians and journalists sometimes confuse culture two and culture one without being aware of it: the adaptation problems of immigrants to their new host country are discussed in terms of promoting folk dance groups. But culture two deals with much more fundamental human processes than culture one; it deals with the things that hurt.

Culture (two) is always a collective phenomenon, because it is at least partly shared with people who live or lived within the same social environment, which is where it was learned. It is *the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category¹ of people from another.²*

Culture is learned, not inherited. It derives from one's social environment, not from one's genes. Culture should be distinguished from human nature on one side, and from an individual's personality on the other (see Fig. 1.1), although exactly where the borders lie between human nature and culture, and between culture and personality, is a matter of discussion among social scientists.

Human nature is what all human beings, from the Russian professor to the Australian aborigine, have in common: it represents the universal level in one's mental software. It is inherited with one's genes; within the computer analogy it is the 'operating system' which determines one's physical and basic psychological functioning. The human ability to feel fear, anger, love, joy, sadness, the need to associate with others, to play and exercise oneself, the facility to observe the environment and to talk about it with other humans all belong to this level of mental programming. However, what one does with these feelings, how one expresses fear, joy, observations, and so on, is modified by culture. Human nature is not as 'human' as the term

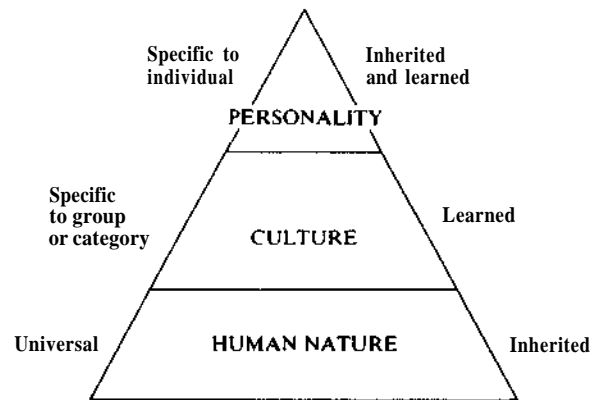


Fig. 1.1 Three levels of uniqueness in human mental programming

suggests, because certain aspects of it are shared with parts of the animal world.³

The *personality* of an individual, on the other hand, is her/his unique personal set of mental programs which (s)he does not share with any other human being. It is based upon traits which are partly inherited with the individual's unique set of genes and partly learned. 'Learned' means: modified by the influence of collective programming (culture) *as well as* unique personal experiences.

Cultural traits have often been attributed to heredity, because philosophers and other scholars in the past did not know how to explain otherwise the remarkable stability of differences in culture patterns among human groups. They underestimated the impact of learning from previous generations and of teaching to a future generation what one has learned oneself. The role of heredity is exaggerated in the pseudo-theories of *race*, which have been responsible, among other things, for the Holocaust organized by the Nazis during the Second World War. Racial and ethnic strife is often justified by unfounded arguments of cultural superiority and inferiority.

In the USA, a heated scientific discussion erupted in the late 1960s on whether blacks were genetically less intelligent than whites.⁴ The issue became less popular in the 1970s, after some researchers had demonstrated that using the same logic and tests, Asians in the USA on average scored *more* in intelligence than whites. It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to find tests that are culture free. This means that they reflect only ability, not the differences in, for example, social opportunity. There is little doubt that, on average, blacks in the USA (and other minority and even majority groups in other countries) have fewer *opportunities* than whites.

Cultural relativism

The student of culture finds human groups and categories thinking, feeling, and acting differently, but there are no scientific standards for considering one group as intrinsically superior or inferior to another. Studying differences in culture among groups and societies presupposes a position of cultural relativism.⁵ Claude Lévi-Strauss, the grand old man of French anthropology, has expressed it as follows:

'Cultural relativism affirms that one culture has no absolute criteria for judging the activities of another culture as "low" or "noble". However, every culture can and should apply such judgment to its own activities, because its members are actors as well as observers.'⁶

Cultural relativism does not imply normlessness for oneself, nor for one's society. It does call for suspending judgment when dealing with groups or societies different from one's own. One should think twice before applying the norms of one person, group or society to another. Information about the nature of the cultural differences between societies, their roots, and their consequences should precede judgment and action.

Even after having been informed, the foreign observer is still likely to deplore certain ways of the other society. If (s)he is professionally involved in the other society, for example as an expatriate manager or development assistance expert, (s)he may very well want to induce changes. In colonial days, foreigners often wielded absolute power in other societies and they could impose their rules on it. In these postcolonial days, foreigners who want to change something in another society will have to negotiate their interventions. Again, negotiation is more likely to succeed when the parties concerned understand the reasons for the differences in viewpoints.

Symbols, heroes, rituals, and values

Cultural differences manifest themselves in several ways. From the many terms used to describe manifestations of culture the following four together cover the total concept rather neatly: symbols, heroes, rituals, and values. In Fig. 1.2 these are illustrated as the skins of an onion, indicating that symbols represent the most superficial and values the deepest manifestations of culture, with heroes and rituals in between.

Symbols are words, gestures, pictures or objects that carry a particular meaning which is only recognized by those who share the culture. The words in a language or jargon belong to this category, as do dress, hairstyles, Coca-Cola, flags, and status symbols. New symbols are easily developed and old ones disappear: symbols from one cultural group are regularly copied by others. This is why symbols have been put into the outer, most superficial layer of Fig. 1.2.

Heroes are persons, alive or dead, real or imaginary, who possess characteristics which are highly prized in a culture, and who thus serve as models for behavior. Even phantasy or cartoon figures, like Batman or, as a contrast, Snoopy in the USA, Asterix in France, or Ollie B. Bommel (Mr Bumble) in the Netherlands can serve as cultural heroes. In this age of television, outward appearances have become more important in the choice of heroes than they were before.

Rituals are collective activities, technically superfluous in reaching desired ends, but which, within a culture, are considered as socially essential: they are therefore carried out for their own sake. Ways of greeting and paying respect to others, social and religious ceremonies are examples. Business and political meetings organized for seemingly rational reasons often serve mainly ritual purposes, like allowing the leaders to assert themselves.

In Fig. 1.2 symbols, heroes, and rituals have been subsumed under the term *practices*. As such, they are visible to an outside observer; their cultural meaning, however, is invisible and lies precisely and only in the way these practices are interpreted by the insiders.

The core of culture according to Fig. 1.2 is formed by *values*. Values are broad tendencies to prefer certain states of affairs over others. Values are feelings with an arrow to it: they have a plus and a minus side. They deal with:

evil vs. good
dirty vs. clean
ugly vs. beautiful
unnatural vs. natural
abnormal vs. normal
paradoxical vs. logical
irrational vs. rational

Values are among the first things children learn—not consciously, but implicitly. Development psychologists believe that by the age of 10, most children have their basic value system firmly in place, and after that age, changes are difficult to make. Because they were acquired so early in our lives, many values remain unconscious to those who hold them. Therefore they cannot be discussed, nor can they be directly observed by outsiders. They can only be inferred from the way people act under various circumstances.

For systematic research on values, inferring them from people's actions is cumbersome and ambiguous. Various paper-and-pencil questionnaires have been developed which ask for people's preferences among alternatives. The answers should not be taken too literally in practice, people will

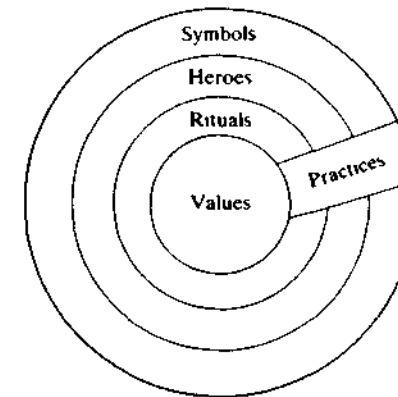


Fig. 1.2 The 'onion diagram': manifestations of culture at different levels of depth

not always act as they have scored on the questionnaire. Still the questionnaires provide useful information, because they show differences in answers between groups or categories of respondents. For example, suppose a question asks for one's preference for time off from work versus more pay. An individual employee who states (s)he prefers time off may in fact choose the money if presented with the actual choice, but if in group A more people claim preferring time off than in group B, this does indicate a cultural difference between these groups in the relative value of free time versus money.

In interpreting people's statements about their values it is important to distinguish between the *desirable* and the *desired*: how people think the world ought to be versus what people want for themselves. Questions about the desirable refer to people in general and are worded in terms of right/wrong, agree/disagree or something similar. In the abstract, everybody is in favor of virtue and opposed to sin, and answers about the desirable express people's views about what represents virtue and what corresponds to sin. The desired, on the contrary, is worded in terms of 'you' or 'me' and what we consider important, what we want for ourselves, including our less virtuous desires. The desirable bears only a faint resemblance to actual behavior, but even statements about the desired, although closer to actual behavior, should not necessarily correspond to the way people really behave when they have to choose.

What distinguishes the desirable from the desired is the nature of the *norms* involved. Norms are the standards for values that exist within a group or category of people.⁷ In the case of the desirable, the norm is absolute, pertaining to what is ethically right. In the case of the desired, the norm is

statistical: it indicates the choices actually made by the majority. The desirable relates more to ideology, the desired to practical matters.

Interpretations of value studies which neglect the difference between the desirable and the desired may lead to paradoxical results. A case in which the two produced diametrically opposed answers was found in the IBM studies (see later in this chapter). Employees in different countries were asked for their agreement or disagreement with the statement 'Employees in industry should participate more in the decisions made by management'. This is a statement about the desirable. In another question people were asked whether they personally preferred a manager who 'usually consults with subordinates before reaching a decision'. This is a statement about the desired. A comparison between the answers to these two questions revealed that employees in countries where the manager who consults was less popular, agreed more with the general statement that employees should participate more, and vice versa; maybe the ideology served as a compensation for the day-to-day relationship with the boss (Hofstede, 1980, p. 109; 1984, p. 82).

Layers of culture

As almost everyone belongs to a number of different groups and categories of people at the same time, people unavoidably carry several layers of mental programming within themselves, corresponding to different levels of culture. For example:

- a national level according to one's country (or countries for people who migrated during their lifetime);
- a regional and/or ethnic and/or religious and/or linguistic affiliation level, as most nations are composed of culturally different regions and/or ethnic and/or religious and/or language groups;
- a gender level, according to whether a person was born as a girl or as a boy;
- a generation level, which separates grandparents from parents from children;
- a social class level, associated with educational opportunities and with a person's occupation or profession;
- for those who are employed, an organizational or corporate level according to the way employees have been socialized by their work organization.

Additions to this list are easy to make. The mental programs from these various levels are not necessarily in harmony. In modern society they are often partly conflicting: for example, religious values may conflict with generation values; gender values with organizational practices. Conflicting

mental programs within people make it difficult to anticipate their behavior in a new situation.

National culture differences

Human societies have existed for at least 10 000 years, possibly much longer. Archaeologists believe that the first humans led a nomadic existence as hunter-gatherers. After many thousands of years, some of them settled down as farmers. Gradually some farming communities grew into larger settlements, which became towns, cities, and finally modern megalopolises like Mexico City with over 25 million inhabitants.

Different human societies have followed this development to different extents, so that hunter-gatherers survive even today (according to some, the modern urban yuppie has reverted to a hunting-gathering state). As the world became more and more populated, an amazing variety of answers was found to the basic question of how people can live together and form some kind of a structured society.

In the fertile areas of the world large empires had already been built several thousand years ago, usually because the rulers of one part succeeded in conquering other parts. The oldest empire in existence within living memory is China. Although it had not always been unified, the Chinese empire possessed a continuous history of about 4000 years. Other empires disintegrated: in the eastern Mediterranean and southwestern part of Asia empires grew, flourished, and fell, only to be succeeded by others: the Sumerian, Babylonian, Assyrian, Egyptian, Persian, Greek, Roman, and Turkish states, to mention only a few. The South Asian subcontinent and the Indonesian archipelago had their empires, like the Maurya, the Gupta, and later the Moghul in India and the Majapahit on Java; in Central and South America the Aztec, Maya, and Inca empires have left their monuments. In Africa, Ethiopia and Benin are examples of ancient states.

Next to and often within the territory of these larger empires, smaller units survived in the form of tribes or independent small 'kingdoms'. Even now, in New Guinea most of the population lives in small and relatively isolated tribes, each with its own language, and hardly integrated into the larger society.

The invention of 'nations', political units into which the entire world is divided and to one of which every human being is supposed to belong—as manifested by her or his passport—is a recent phenomenon in human history. Earlier, there were states, but not everybody belonged to one of these or identified with one. The nation system was only introduced worldwide in the mid-twentieth century. It followed the colonial system which had developed during the preceding three centuries. In this colonial period the technologically advanced countries of Western Europe divided

among themselves virtually all the territories of the globe which were not held by another strong political power. The borders between the ex-colonial nations still reflect the colonial legacy. In Africa, particularly, national borders correspond more to the logic of the colonial powers than to the cultural dividing lines of the local populations.

Nations, therefore, should not be equated to *societies*. Historically, societies are organically developed forms of social organization, and the concept of a common culture applies strictly speaking, more to societies than to nations. Nevertheless, many nations do form historically developed wholes even if they consist of clearly different groups and even if they contain less integrated minorities.

Within nations that have existed for some time there are strong forces towards further integration: (usually) one dominant national language, common mass media, a national education system, a national army, a national political system, national representation in sports events with a strong symbolic and emotional appeal, a national market for certain skills, products, and services. Today's nations do not attain the degree of internal homogeneity of the isolated, usually nonliterate societies studied by field anthropologists, but they are the source of a considerable amount of common mental programming of their citizens.⁸

On the other hand there remains a tendency for ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups to fight for recognition of their own identity, if not for national independence; this tendency has been increasing rather than decreasing in the latter part of the twentieth century. Examples are the Ulster Roman Catholics, the Belgian Flemish, the Basques in Spain and France, the Kurds in Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey, and many of the ethnic groups in the Soviet Union.

In research on cultural differences nationality—the passport one holds—should therefore be used with care. Yet it is often the only feasible criterion for classification. Rightly or wrongly, collective properties are ascribed to the citizens of certain countries: people refer to 'typically American', 'typically German', or 'typically Japanese' behavior. Using nationality as a criterion is a matter of expediency, because it is immensely easier to obtain data for nations than for organic homogeneous societies. Nations as political bodies supply all kinds of statistics about their populations. Survey data, i.e., the answers of people on paper-and-pencil questionnaires related to their culture, are also mostly collected through national networks. Where it is possible to separate results by regional, ethnic or linguistic group, this should be done.

A strong reason for collecting data at the level of nations is that one of the purposes of the research is to promote cooperation among nations. As was

argued at the beginning of this chapter, the (over 200) nations that exist today populate one single world and we either survive or perish together. So it makes practical sense to focus on cultural factors separating or uniting nations.

Dimensions of national cultures

In the first half of the twentieth century, social anthropology has developed the conviction that all societies, modern or traditional, face the same basic problems; only the answers differ. American anthropologists, in particular Ruth Benedict (1887-1948) and Margaret Mead (1901-1978), played an important role in popularizing this message for a wide audience.

The logical next step was that social scientists attempted to identify *what* problems were common to all societies, through conceptual reasoning and reflection upon field experiences, as well as through statistical studies. In 1954 two Americans, the sociologist Alex Inkeles and the psychologist Daniel Levinson, published a broad survey of the English-language literature on national culture. They suggested that the following issues qualify as common basic problems worldwide, with consequences for the functioning of societies, of groups within those societies, and of individuals within those groups:

1. Relation to authority
2. Conception of self, in particular:
 - a. the relationship between individual and society, and
 - b. the individual's concept of masculinity and femininity
3. Ways of dealing with conflicts, including the control of aggression and the expression of feelings. (Inkeles and Levinson, 1969, pp. 447ff.)

Twenty years later I was given the opportunity of studying a large body of survey data about the values of people in over 50 countries around the world. These people worked in the local subsidiaries of one large multinational corporation—IBM. At first sight it may seem surprising that employees of a multinational—a very special kind of people—could serve for identifying differences in *national* value systems. However, from one country to another they represent almost perfectly matched samples: they are similar in all respects except nationality, which makes the effect of nationality differences in their answers stand out unusually clearly.

A statistical analysis of the answers on questions about the values of similar IBM employees in different countries revealed common problems, but with solutions differing from country to country, in the following areas:

1. Social inequality, including the relationship with authority;
2. The relationship between the individual and the group;

3. Concepts of masculinity and femininity: the social implications of having been born as a boy or a girl;
4. Ways of dealing with uncertainty, relating to the control of aggression and the expression of emotions.

These empirical results covered amazingly well the areas predicted by Inkeles and Levinson 20 years before. The discovery of their prediction provided strong support for the theoretical importance of the empirical findings. Problems which are basic to all human societies should turn up in different studies regardless of the approaches followed. The Inkeles and Levinson study is not the only one whose conclusions overlap with mine, but it is the one that most strikingly predicts what I found.⁹

The four basic problem areas defined by Inkeles and Levinson and empirically found in the IBM data represent *dimensions* of cultures. A dimension is an aspect of a culture that can be measured relative to other cultures. The basic problem areas correspond to dimensions which I named *power distance* (from small to large), *collectivism* versus *individualism*, *femininity* versus *masculinity*, and *uncertainty avoidance* (from weak to strong). Each of these terms existed already in some part of the social sciences, and they seemed to apply reasonably well to the basic problem area each dimension stands for. Together they form a four-dimensional (4-D) model of differences among national cultures. Each country in this model is characterized by a score on each of the four dimensions.

A dimension groups together a number of phenomena in a society which were empirically found to occur in combination, even if at first sight there does not always seem to be a logical necessity for their going together. The logic of societies, however, is not the same as the logic of the individuals looking at them. The grouping of the different aspects of a dimension is always based on statistical relationships, that is, on *trends* for these phenomena to occur in combination, not on iron links. Some aspects in some societies may go against a general trend found across most other societies. Because they are found with the help of statistical methods dimensions can only be detected on the basis of information about a certain number of countries—say, at least 10. In the case of the IBM research I was fortunate to obtain comparable data about culturally determined values from 50 countries and three multicountry regions, which made the dimensions within their differences stand out quite clearly.

More recently, a fifth dimension of differences among national cultures was identified, opposing a *long-term orientation* in life to a *short-term orientation*. The fact that it had not been encountered earlier can be attributed to a cultural bias in the minds of the various scholars studying culture, including myself. We all shared a 'Western' way of thinking. The new dimension was discovered when Michael Harris Bond, a Canadian located in the Far East

for many years, studied people's values around the world using a questionnaire composed by 'Eastern', in this case Chinese, minds. Besides adding this highly relevant new dimension, Bond's work showed the all-pervading impact of culture: even the minds of the researchers studying it are programmed according to their own particular cultural framework.

The scores for each country on one dimension can be pictured as points along a line. For two dimensions at a time, they become points in a diagram. For three dimensions, they could, with some imagination be seen as points in space. For four or five dimensions they become difficult to envisage. This is a disadvantage of the dimensional model. Another way of picturing differences among countries (or other social systems) is through *typologies* instead of dimensions. A typology describes a number of ideal types, each of them easy to imagine. Dividing countries into the First, Second, and Third World is such a typology. A more sophisticated example is found in the work of the French political historian Emmanuel Todd who divides the cultures of the world according to the family structure traditionally prevailing in that culture. He arrives at eight types, four of which occur in Europe. Todd's thesis is that these historically preserved family structures explain the success of a particular type of political ideology in a country (Todd, 1983).

Whereas typologies are easier to grasp than dimensions, they are still problematic in empirical research. Real cases seldom fully correspond to one single ideal type. Most cases are hybrids, and arbitrary rules have to be made for classifying them as belonging to one of the types. With a dimensional model, on the contrary, cases can always be scored unambiguously. On the basis of their dimension scores cases can *afterwards* empirically be sorted into clusters with similar scores. These clusters then form an empirical typology. More than 50 countries in the IBM study could, on the basis of their 4-D scores, be sorted into 13 such clusters.¹⁰

In practice, typologies and dimensional models can be considered as complementary. Dimensional models are preferable for research but typologies for teaching purposes. This book will use a kind of typology approach for explaining each of the five dimensions. For every separate dimension it describes the two opposite extremes, which can be seen as ideal types. Some of the dimensions are subsequently taken two by two, which creates four ideal types. However, the country scores on the dimensions will show that most real cases are somewhere in between the extremes pictured.

Cultural differences according to region, religion, gender, generation, and class

Regional, ethnic, and religious cultures account for differences within countries; ethnic and religious groups often transcend political country

borders. Such groups form minorities at the crossroads between the dominant culture of the nation and their own traditional group culture. Some assimilate into the mainstream, although this may take a generation or more; others continue to stick to their own ways. The USA, as the world's most prominent example of a people composed of immigrants, shows examples of both assimilation (the 'melting pot') and retention of group identities over generations (an example are the Pennsylvania Dutch). Discrimination according to ethnic origin delays assimilation and represents a problem in many countries. Regional, ethnic, and religious cultures can be described in the same terms as national cultures: basically, the same dimensions which were found to differentiate among national cultures apply to these differences within countries.

Religious affiliation by itself is less culturally relevant than is often assumed. If we trace the religious history of countries, then the religion a population has embraced along with the version of that religion seem to have been a *result* of previously existing cultural value patterns as much as a *cause* of cultural differences. The great religions of the world, at some time in their history, have all undergone profound schisms: between Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, and various Protestant groups in Christianity; between Sunni and Shia in Islam; between liberals and various fundamentalist groups in Jewry; between Hinayana and Mahayana in Buddhism. Cultural differences among groups of believers have always played a major role in such schisms. For example, the Reformation movement within the Roman Catholic Church in the sixteenth century initially affected all of Europe. However, in countries which more than a thousand years earlier had belonged to the Roman Empire, a Counter-Reformation reinstated the authority of the Roman church. In the end, the Reformation only succeeded in countries without a Roman tradition. Although today most of Northern Europe is Protestant and most of Southern Europe Roman Catholic, it is not this religious split which is at the origin of the cultural differences between North and South but the inheritance of the Roman Empire. This does not exclude that once a religion has settled, it does reinforce the value patterns on the basis of which it was adopted, by making these into core elements in its teachings.

Gender differences are not usually described in terms of cultures. It can be revealing to do so. If we recognize that within each society there is a men's culture which differs from a women's culture, this helps to explain why it is so difficult to change traditional gender roles. Women are not considered suitable for jobs traditionally filled by men, not because they are technically unable to perform these jobs, but because women do not carry the symbols, do not correspond to the hero images, do not participate in the rituals or foster the values dominant in the men's culture; and vice versa. Feelings and

fears about behaviors by the opposite sex are of the same order of intensity as the reactions of people exposed to foreign cultures.

Generation differences in symbols, heroes, rituals, and values are evident to most people. They are often overestimated. Complaints about youth having lost respect for the values of their elders have been found on Egyptian papyrus scrolls dating from 2000 BC and in the writings of Hesiod, a Greek author from the end of the eighth century BC. Many differences in practices and values between generations will be just normal attributes of age which repeat themselves for each successive pair of generations. Historical events, however, do affect some generations in a special way. The Chinese who were of student age during the Cultural Revolution stand witness to this. The development of technology also leads to a difference between generations which is unique.

Not all values and practices in a society, however, are affected by technology or its products. If young Turks drink Coca-Cola this does not necessarily affect their attitudes toward authority. In some respects, young Turks differ from old Turks; just as young Americans differ from old Americans. Such differences often involve the relatively superficial spheres of symbols and heroes, of fashion and consumption. In the sphere of values, i.e., fundamental attitudes towards life and towards other people, young Turks differ from young Americans just as much as old Turks differed from old Americans. There is no evidence that the cultures of present-day generations from different countries are converging.

Social classes carry different class cultures. Social class is associated with educational opportunities and with a person's occupation or profession; this even applies in countries which their governments call socialist, preaching a classless society. Education and occupation are in themselves powerful sources of cultural learning. There is no standard definition of social class which applies across all countries, and people in different countries distinguish different types and numbers of class. The criteria for allocating a person to a class are often cultural: symbols play an important role, such as accents in speaking the national language, the use and nonuse of certain words, and manners. The confrontation between the two jurors in *Twelve Angry Men* also contains a class component.

Gender, generation, and class cultures can only partly be classified by the four dimensions found for national cultures. This is because they are not *groups* but *categories* of people. Countries (and ethnic groups too) are integrated social systems. The four dimensions apply to the basic problems of such systems. Categories like gender, generation, or class are only parts of social systems and therefore not all dimensions apply to them. Gender, generation, and class cultures should be described in their own terms, based on special studies of such cultures.