

Cultural Dimensions Geert Hofstede (1980)

National cultures can be described according to the analysis of Geert Hofstede. These ideas were first based on a large research project into national culture differences across subsidiaries of a multinational corporation (IBM) in 64 countries. Subsequent studies by others covered students in 23 countries, elites in 19 countries, commercial airline pilots in 23 countries, up-market consumers in 15 countries, and civil service managers in 14 countries. Together these studies identified and validated four independent dimensions of national culture differences, with a fifth dimension added later.

- Power Distance
- Individualism
- Masculinity
- Uncertainty Avoidance
- Long-Term Orientation

The Drawbacks of Applying the Hofstede Model

The Hofstede Model of Cultural Dimensions can be of great use when it comes to analyzing a country's culture. There are however a few things one has to keep in mind.

Firstly, the averages of a country do not relate to individuals of that country. Even though this model has proven to be quite often correct when applied to the general population, one must be aware that not all individuals or even regions with subcultures fit into the mould. It is to be used as a guide to understanding the difference in culture between countries, not as law set in stone. As always, there are exceptions to the rule.

Secondly, how accurate is the data? The data has been collected through questionnaires, which have their own limitations. Not only that, but in some cultures the context of the question asked is as important as its content. Especially in group-oriented cultures, individuals might tend to answer questions as if they were addressed to the group he/she belongs to. While on the other hand in the United States, which is an individualistic culture, the answers will most likely be answered and perceived through the eyes of that individual.

Lastly, is the data up to date? How much does the culture of a country change over time, either by internal or external influences?

For more in-depth information you can find this model clearly outlined in Geert Hofstede's book, *Cultures and Organizations, Software of the Mind*.

(Making Sense of Cross Cultural Communication
<http://www.clearlycultural.com/geert-hofstede-cultural-dimensions>)

Leadership Training from Mindtools
(http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_66.htm)