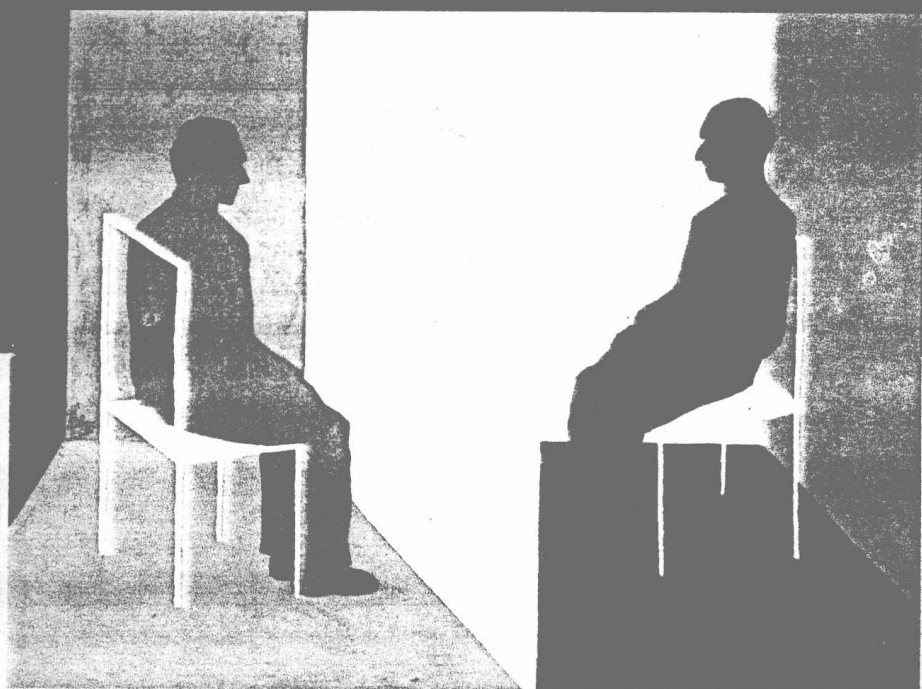




# Cultures and Organizations

INTERCULTURAL COOPERATION AND  
ITS IMPORTANCE FOR SURVIVAL

SOFTWARE OF THE MIND



**GEERT HOFSTEDE**

*Author of Culture's Consequences*

THE SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIST SERIES

GEERT HOFSTEDE

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## *Cultures and Organizations*

Geert Hofstede is Professor of Organizational Anthropology and International Management at the University of Limburg at Maastricht, the Netherlands, where he is the founder and first director of the Institute for Research on Intercultural Cooperation (IRIC). His career has moved between industry and academia. He has worked in multinational companies in a variety of roles from production worker to director of human resources, and as a consultant to business and government organizations in Europe, Asia and North America. His best known books are *The Game of Budget Control* and *Culture's Consequences*, and he has published both popular and scholarly articles. His work has been translated into several languages.

Bob Garratt is a management consultant, Chairman of Media Projects International, and Visiting Fellow at the Management School of Imperial College, London. He is Chairman of the Association for Management Education and Development. He is the editor of the *Successful Manager* series and this *Successful Strategist* series.

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# Preface

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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 Waisfisiz, management consultant in The Hague, was a permanent source of

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, René Olie, Louise Pannenburg-Stutterheim, 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 their 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.

In the panel of informants, discussion partners, and benevolent critics for new ideas during the book's gestation period the members of the Hofstede tribe: 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 varied fields. Our common interest in cultural differences has remained, and it has again been a source of support both at the intellectual and at the emotional level. I think of them all with love and gratitude.

This book is dedicated to our grandchildren Liesbeth and Bregje Hofstede and others 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  
Maastricht/Velp, the Netherlands



## Preface to the paperback edition

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Three years after the hardcover edition this book now becomes available as a paperback. The text of both editions is identical, except that references to recent political events have been updated. The relevance of the cultural analysis offered has not suffered at all, on the contrary. The role of culture in the many conflicts and threats that make people around the world suffer and sometimes even endanger world survival has only become more evident. This also implies that cultural forces should play a role in solutions to small and big problems that touch more than one country.

*Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* was written for many different kinds of people so, as its author, I am delighted that this edition will make it accessible to a wider circle of readers. This circle has further been extended by translations: Chinese, Danish, Dutch, Finnish, French, German, Hungarian, Japanese, Korean, Norwegian and Swedish versions have appeared to date or are about to appear. What more can the author of a book on intercultural cooperation hope for?

Geert Hofstede  
Hong Kong, January 1994

# A guide through this book

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## Part I

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.

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