



# INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION THEORY

## Current Perspectives

edited by **WILLIAM B. GUDYKUNST**, *State University of New York  
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Published in Cooperation with  
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**Commission on International and Intercultural Communication**

No one concerned with intercultural communication theory can afford to miss the provocative, state-of-the-art perspectives showcased in this volume. Seventh in a series of international and intercultural communication annuals, **Intercultural Communication Theory** is the first volume to be devoted to a single topic.

In eighteen original essays, distinguished authors consider the implications of traditional communication theories for intercultural communication and examine major recent developments in intercultural communication. Drawing on insights from such sister disciplines as social psychology, linguistics, and sociology, they evaluate promising approaches that may well lead to future conceptual advances.

**Intercultural Communication Theory** brings together authoritative essays that clarify the prospects and challenges of this emerging discipline. It is an invaluable resource for professionals, scholars, and students in communication, psychology, sociology, and related areas.

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**International and Intercultural Communication Annual, Volume VII**

ISBN 0-8039-1970-0 hardcover

ISBN 0-8039-1969-7 softcover



**SAGE PUBLICATIONS**

The Publishers of Professional Social Science  
Beverly Hills / London / New Delhi

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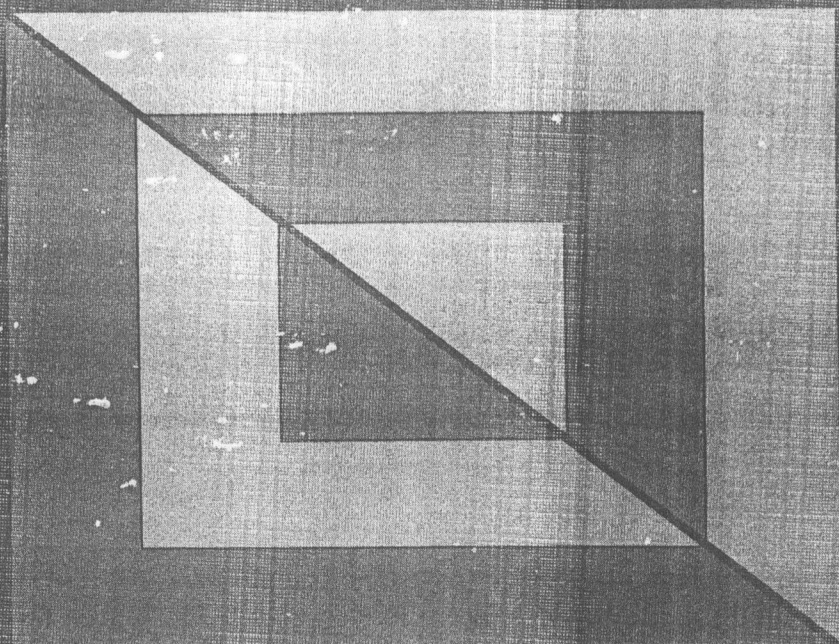
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ABRIDGED EDITION

# CULTURE'S CONSEQUENCES

Geert Hofstede



International Differences in  
Work-Related Values

VOLUME 5, CROSS-CULTURAL RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY SERIES



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## **International Differences in Work-Related Values**

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13723



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*For information address:*

SAGE Publications, Inc.  
275 South Beverly Drive  
Beverly Hills, California 90212

SAGE Publications India Pvt. Ltd.  
C-236 Defence Colony  
New Delhi 110 024, India



SAGE Publications Ltd  
28 Banner Street  
London EC1Y 8QE, England

Printed in the United States of America

**Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data**

Hofstede, Geert H.

Culture's consequences, international differences in work-related values. Abridged edition

(Cross-cultural research and methodology series ; 5)

Bibliography: p.

Includes indexes.

I. Ethnopsychology. 2. National characteristics.

3. Work ethic. I. Title. II. Series.

GN502.H63 1982 155.8 82-21539

ISBN 0-8039-1306-0 (pbk.)

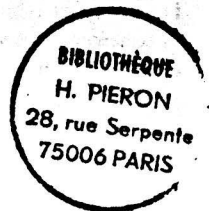
SECOND PRINTING, 1986

Inv. 21344



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*"Vérité en-deça des Pyrénées,  
erreur au-delà"*

Blaise Pascal, 1623-1662\*

\*from *Pensées*, 60 (294). My translation: "There are truths on this side of the Pyrenees which are falsehoods on the other."

## ABOUT THE SERIES

*The Sage Series on Cross-Cultural Research and Methodology* was created to present comparative studies on cross-cultural topics and interdisciplinary research. Inaugurated in 1975, the *Series* is designed to satisfy a growing need to integrate research method and theory and to dissect issues in comparative analyses across cultures. The recent ascent of the cross-cultural method in social and behavioral science has largely been due to a recognition of methodological power inherent in the comparative perspective; a truly international approach to the study of behavioral, social, and cultural variables can be done only within such a methodological framework.

Each volume in the *Series* presents substantive cross-cultural studies and considerations of the strengths, interrelationships, and weaknesses of its various methodologies, drawing upon work done in anthropology, political science, psychology, and sociology. Both individual researchers knowledgeable in more than one discipline and teams of specialists with differing disciplinary backgrounds have contributed to the *Series*. While each individual volume may represent the integration of only a few disciplines, *the cumulative totality of the Series will reflect an effort to bridge gaps of methodology and conceptualizations across all disciplines and many cultures.*

As co-editors, it is our pleasure to present *Culture's Consequences* (Volume 5) by Geert Hofstede, which breaks new ground by moving into the domain of international organizations. Hofstede's book is the result of a prodigious effort in scholarship and methodology, and will be heralded as a major source of information about value differences around the world. Imagine the task which Hofstede took on with such enthusiasm: He analyzes data collected in detailed questionnaire format from hundreds of individuals in 40 countries, and at *two* points in time. At the same time, he pays attention to all of the attendant methodological pitfalls associated with research of this kind. Finally, he makes the entire effort relevant, understandable, and sound from both a theoretical and practical standpoint. Hofstede has succeeded in doing all of these things, and has uncovered four value dimensions that may be so fundamental to human activity that they will serve as necessary criteria in much future culture-comparative work. The book is an invaluable addition to the *Series* and to a truly international and interdisciplinary audience of cross-cultural researchers.

—Walter J. Lonner  
Western Washington University

—John W. Berry  
Queen's University

## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

The survival of mankind will depend to a large extent on the ability of people who think differently to act together. International collaboration presupposes some understanding of where others' thinking differs from ours. Exploring the way in which nationality predisposes our thinking is therefore not an intellectual luxury. A better understanding of invisible cultural differences is one of the main contributions the social sciences can make to practical policy makers in governments, organizations, and institutions—and to ordinary citizens.

Highlighting culture-dependent differences in thinking and acting is not always a welcome intervention. My general experience in discussing the topics of this book with various audiences is that the amount of international exposure within the group strongly affects the way the subject is received. Internationally experienced audiences have little trouble seeing its importance and tolerating a certain amount of introspection into their own cultural constraints. Internationally naive audiences have difficulty seeing the points, and some members even feel insulted when their own culture is discussed.

Readers of the book may go through the same kind of experiences. Multicultural readers and those who have earlier gone through one or more culture shocks in their lives may find that the book expresses in formal terms much that they already intuitively knew. For readers whose activities have so far been confined within a single national culture, the book itself may have a certain culture-shock effect: They will find question marks attached to the universal validity of much that they have taken for granted so far and of much that has become dear to them.

Nevertheless, I hope the book will find both multicultural and monocultural readers in many of the countries described and in others as well; and that many of these readers will respond to the author's request of feedback and descriptions of experiences (see Appendix 3). The book aims at a readership of policy makers in public and private organizations and scholars and students from various disciplines: comparative management, anthropology, economics, political science, psychology, sociology, comparative law, history, and social geography.

The research project which forms the basis of this book has a long history, going back to the preparation of the first international HERMES survey in 1966. I could not foresee then that my involvement with this survey should eventually lead to my spending five years, from late 1973 to the end of 1978, on in-depth research on *Culture's Consequences*. Some of us suspected the scientific importance of the HERMES data as early as 1968. My colleagues of those days went on to other tasks; I alone remained to follow the intellectual track offered by this unique data base. It led

me from psychology into sociology and then into political science and anthropology; it also led us to living as a family in three countries, while surviving on money from five. To a large extent it has determined our lives over the past eight years. It was not always smooth and easy, but we have not regretted it. Never a dull moment.

A preface is the place for paying tribute to one's supporters. My primary tribute goes to the HERMES Corporation and its unnamed management, who believed us when we claimed that these were useful data to collect and who afterwards made the data available to general research; while from 1975-1978 they also supplied a research grant to support my work. Then there is a long list of persons who at some time contributed to the progress of the project. Among the pioneers of the HERMES study I must mention David Sirota, who created many of the questions that afterwards proved so important as indicators of culture, and somewhat later Paul de Koning and Allen Kraut. There are the data processors who managed my requests for handling the unwieldy data bank for the world's largest survey; in particular, Frits Claus and Jack Zandstra. There are the statistics experts who helped with some phases of the analysis: Peter Van Hoesel at Leyden University, Klaus Brockhoff at Kiel University, and Zvi Maimon at Tel Aviv University. There are my colleagues at the European Institute for Advanced Studies in Management at Brussels who stimulated me and acted as critical discussion partners; in particular, Alan Dale, Claude Faucheux, André Laurent, and Bengt Stymne. There are those who critically read through the manuscript and commented upon it: Torbjörn Stjernberg, Steven Velds (who read everything), Harry Triandis, Alberto Marradi, Robert Marsh, Seenu Srinivasan, and Wilfrid Dixon (who read parts). There is the competent staff of the European Institute—in particular Gerry Dirickx, who supplied library assistance, and my most essential supporter, Christiane Merckaert, who first turned 18 almost unreadable manuscripts into working papers and then typed the book.

Finally, there is a team of interested discussion partners and critics, experienced in multicultural living, sharing their observations, the younger among them even willing (if properly compensated) to act as research associate or administrative assistant. I mean Maaïke Hofstede-Van den Hoek, Gert-Jan Hofstede, Rokus Hofstede, Bart Hofstede, and Gideon Hofstede. This is more their book than they will believe.

—Geert Hofstede

Zwijndrecht, Netherlands  
Spring 1980

## PREFACE TO THE ABRIDGED EDITION

The original integral edition of *Culture's Consequences* was put together as a scholarly book, including all source data and statistical proofs for the arguments presented. For those readers who are willing to take both the data and the statistics for granted, this abridged edition limits itself to the arguments, and refers the reader to the integral edition for proof. It has further reduced the length of the text by leaving out some sections more concerned with methodology than with conclusions. Finally, it has reduced the number of literature references and footnotes.

—G. H.

Zwijndrecht, Netherlands  
Autumn 1982

## SUMMARY OF THE BOOK

This book explores the differences in thinking and social action that exist between members of 40 different modern nations. It argues that people carry "mental programs" which are developed in the family in early childhood and reinforced in schools and organizations, and that these mental programs contain a component of national culture. They are most clearly expressed in the different values that predominate among people from different countries.

Cross-cultural studies proliferate in all the social sciences, but they usually lack a theory of the key variable: culture itself. Names of countries are usually treated as residues of undefined variance in the phenomena found. *Culture's Consequences* aims at being specific about the elements of which culture is composed. It identifies four main dimensions along which dominant value systems in the 40 countries can be ordered and which affect human thinking, organizations, and institutions in predictable ways.

The data used for the empirical part of the research were extracted from an existing bank of paper-and-pencil survey results collected within subsidiaries of one large multinational business organization in 40 countries, and covering among others many questions about values. The survey was held twice, around 1968 and around 1972, producing a total of over 116,000 questionnaires; respondents can be matched by occupation, age, and sex. Additional data were collected among managers participating in international management development courses and unrelated to the first multinational business organization. The four main dimensions on which country cultures differ were revealed by theoretical reasoning and statistical analysis. They were labeled Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism, and Masculinity. Each of the 40 countries could be given a score on these four dimensions.

The book shows that the same four dimensions are reflected in data from completely different sources, both survey studies of various kinds and nonsurvey comparative studies like McClelland's Achievement Motivation analysis based on a content analysis of children's books. Altogether, data from 38 other studies comparing from five to 39 countries are significantly correlated with one or more of the four dimensions. With few exceptions, these other studies so far had not been related to each other by their authors or by anyone else. In addition, the four dimensions show some significant and meaningful correlations with geographic, economic, demographic, and political national indicators.

The book shows how countries on the basis of their scores on the four dimensions can be divided into culture areas and in some cases is able to point to historical reasons that are likely to have led to the cultural differentiation between the areas.



The fact that the survey data were collected twice over a four-year interval allows an analysis of value developments over this period; it shows no convergency between countries but some worldwide or almost worldwide value shifts.

The differences demonstrated in this book have profound consequences for the validity of the transfer of theories and working methods from one country to another. In the last chapter, the findings are interpreted on behalf of policy makers in national but especially in international and multinational organizations who are confronted daily with the problems of collaboration of members of their staff carrying different culturally influenced mental programs.

## Chapter 1

# VALUES AND CULTURE



### SUMMARY OF THIS CHAPTER

This is an introductory chapter which deals with basic questions of the definition and measurement of "*mental programs*" in people in general, and *values* and *culture* in particular. Mental programs can be found at the universal, the collective, and the individual level. They must be operationalized in order to be measured; four different strategies of operationalization are discussed. Values are distinguished into *values as the desired* and *values as the desirable*. Culture is defined as collective programming of the mind. The word is reserved for describing entire societies; for groups within societies, "subculture" is used. A diagram suggests how culture patterns are rooted in value systems of major groups of the population and how they are stabilized over long periods in history.

The chapter then goes into the study of culture and its specific methodological problems: We change the level of analysis from the individual to society. It refers to the "ecological fallacy" and signals a not infrequent "reverse ecological fallacy." It shows the dangers of ethnocentrism and disciplinary parochialism; and it lists the multitude of different disciplines that can contribute to the comparative study of national cultures. Problems of language and the translation of research instruments are discussed, as well as problems of matching samples in different cultures to obtain functional equivalence. It is shown how marginal phenomena in societies can be as meaningful for comparison as modal phenomena.

The concept of *dimensions of culture* is introduced by an inquiry into the philosophical opposition between the specific and the general, the different and the similar. On the basis of this, four strategies for comparative multisociety studies are dis-