An Empirical Study of Cultural Dimensions and Their Applications

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ATKINS
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This report forms the conclusion of my MSc thesis research. Having written this while working full-time at Atkins in Seattle, this project has taken quite a bit longer than originally anticipated. For that I apologize, and I am grateful to the people at Atkins and at TU Delft that encouraged me to continue working on it at times when I was ready to give up.

I was and am very fascinated by cultural dimensions and how they can be applied, and introducing these concepts to other people was both satisfying and entertaining. However Atkins and other organizations choose to use this document, I hope that I did inspire at least the coworkers that I interviewed to improve their understanding of other cultures.

I would like to use this opportunity to thank the following people for their contribution to this project:

Martin de Jong, for his infinite patience with my delays and distractions throughout the last few years. I enjoyed our many Skype discussions; those were immensely useful to this final report.

Robert Verburg and Li Sun, for their valuable feedback on draft versions of this document, and their flexibility in scheduling meetings and presentations at odd hours during the summer.

Andy Alexander, Dan Brown, and Fergus Hudson at Atkins, for not only allowing me the time to work on this project, but also for being genuinely interested in the process and outcome.

And in particular to all interviewees at Atkins, for their interest, eagerness, and enthusiasm during our discussions. It was a lot of fun.

Many thanks,

Eduard

23 August 2015, Seattle
This report presents an empirical study on cross-cultural analysis, focusing on the applicability of cultural dimensions theory in a professional work environment. This study is one of the first to test cultural dimensions on practitioners. The goal is to find out how practitioners make use of existing theory and how this can be improved.

Through a series of twenty one-on-one interviews with practitioners at engineering services provider Atkins Aerospace, the following results have been obtained: Current awareness of cultural differences and knowledge of cultural dimensions theory is low; practitioners of various experience levels showed good understanding of the theory when introduced to it; useful dimensions were in particular Geert Hofstede’s Individualism, Power Distance, and Indulgence; and practitioners showed keen interest in further learning, but were inconclusive on preferred teaching methods.

Recommendations are that organizations should increase their efforts to train people on cultural dimensions, while theorists should improve the accessibility of their models. Pragmatism is required from all parties, and dimensions that are defined and labeled in a simpler way are more likely to be used by practitioners.

Key Words

Cultural dimensions; Culturology; Geert Hofstede; Michael Minkov
# Table of Contents

Preface ........................................................................................................................................ iii
Abstract ......................................................................................................................................... v
Table of Contents ......................................................................................................................... vi
Abbreviations ............................................................................................................................... viii
1. Introduction .............................................................................................................................. 1
   1.1 Research Context .................................................................................................................. 1
   1.2 Research Questions .............................................................................................................. 2
   1.3 Summary of Theory ............................................................................................................. 2
   1.4 Methodology ....................................................................................................................... 3
   1.5 Report Outline .................................................................................................................... 3
2. Context ...................................................................................................................................... 5
   2.1 Research Objectives ............................................................................................................ 5
   2.2 How to Study Culture? ....................................................................................................... 9
3. Theoretical Framework ............................................................................................................. 15
   3.1 Hofstede ............................................................................................................................. 16
   3.2 Schwartz .............................................................................................................................. 24
   3.3 Trompenaars ...................................................................................................................... 28
   3.4 Inglehart and Baker ............................................................................................................ 33
   3.5 Minkov ............................................................................................................................... 36
   3.6 Project GLOBE .................................................................................................................. 39
   3.7 Clustering ........................................................................................................................... 42
4. Methodology ............................................................................................................................. 47
   4.1 Selection of Dimensions ..................................................................................................... 48
   4.2 Selection of Respondents .................................................................................................... 51
   4.3 Structure of Interviews ....................................................................................................... 54
5. Results ..................................................................................................................................... 57
   5.1 Personal Experience Item ................................................................................................... 58
   5.2 Introduction of Dimensions Item ....................................................................................... 62
   5.3 Recognition of Dimensions Item ....................................................................................... 65
   5.4 Improvement Opportunities Item ...................................................................................... 73
6. Conclusions and Recommendations ....................................................................................... 78
6.1 Research Questions and Answers ............................................................................ 78
6.2 Overview of Conclusions and Recommendations ............................................ 82
6.3 Reflections .............................................................................................................. 84
References ..................................................................................................................... 85
## Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<tr>
<td>GLOBE</td>
<td>Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness</td>
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<td>GNI</td>
<td>Gross National Income</td>
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<tr>
<td>IDV</td>
<td>Individualism</td>
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<tr>
<td>IND</td>
<td>Indulgence vs. Restraint (Hofstede / Minkov)</td>
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<tr>
<td>LTO</td>
<td>Long-Term Orientation (Hofstede)</td>
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<td>MAS</td>
<td>Masculinity (Hofstede)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PDI (or PD)</td>
<td>Power Distance Index (Hofstede)</td>
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<td>UAI</td>
<td>Uncertainty Avoidance Index (Hofstede)</td>
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<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>US (or USA)</td>
<td>United States (of America)</td>
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<td>WVS</td>
<td>World Value Survey</td>
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1. **INTRODUCTION**

Since the publication of Geert Hofstede’s first book on cultural dimensions this concept has become a widely accepted model for analyzing national cultures around the world and how people from different cultures interact. Many other researchers have used Hofstede’s dimensions and created their own to explain specific cultural phenomena they were interested in. A missing voice, however, in the ever-increasing collection of research inspired by cultural dimensions, is that of the practitioner.

This report presents an empirical study on cross-cultural analysis, focusing on the applicability of existing theory on cultural dimensions in a professional work environment. The theory to be tested is the cultural dimensions model proposed by Hofstede and the dimensions constructed by Hofstede and various other researchers. The objective of the study is to find out through a series of interviews with practitioners how the academic construct of cultural dimensions is received and which dimensions in particular correspond to relevant real-life experiences.

1.1 **RESEARCH CONTEXT**

Although increased globalization and a growing focus on international business has certainly led to more interest in the study of different cultures and cross-cultural interaction, there remains a glaring lack of research on how the average, non-academic practitioners would respond to the model of cultural dimensions. Of particular interest is whether dimensions constructed by academic experts would actually be recognized by individuals that are unfamiliar with the intricacies of the theory. After all, the objective of the study of cultures should be to increase mutual understanding, which is only possible when the construct itself is understood.

An example of the current disconnect between academic models and real-life use was found at an international engineering services provider based in the United Kingdom. Atkins Aerospace employs hundreds of engineers that work across offices in five different countries. Nearly all employees are highly educated, intelligent, and internationally oriented, allowing Atkins to work with project teams that span across offices around the globe to deliver cost effective work to clients all over the world. Cross-cultural communication and international team work occurs on a daily basis at Atkins.

Practitioners at Atkins were interviewed to assess the extent of their knowledge of cultural dimensions. The interviews are qualitative in nature and focus on whether the practitioner is familiar with the theory of cultural dimensions and whether he or she recognizes cultural dimensions in their work related interactions with other cultures.

The objective of the interviews is to collect data on what practitioners think about the concept of cultural dimensions and the individual dimensions from different researchers. It can then be assessed how the practitioners’ opinions on dimensions match those of the researchers that developed them, and whether or not the construct of cultural dimensions is an appropriate tool for practitioners to use on the work floor. As far as this author is aware, this has never been investigated before.
1.2 **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The main research questions for this study has been defined as follows:

- How do practitioners make use of existing theory on cultural dimensions and how can this be improved?

To answer the main question, six sub-questions have been established. The answers to these questions will form the foundation of the conclusions of this study.

1. What research has been done on the phenomenon of cultural dimensions and what theoretical models currently exist?
2. How do existing models of cultural dimensions interrelate and what criticism is there on these theories?
3. What do practitioners think of the applicability of the available models and how do they currently apply them?
4. What expectations would practitioners have from a handbook or a set of guidelines and what will be the main conditions for such a handbook?
5. How can the dimensional model be useful for practitioners and how can relevant theoretical knowledge be transitioned into practical guidelines or other applications?
6. What would a handbook for practitioners actually look like and what set of dimensions would it use?

The first and second research questions will be answered through a literature study. The concept of cultural dimensions as proposed by Geert Hofstede is discussed, as well as dimensions models from Hofstede, Schwartz, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, Inglehart and Baker, Minkov, and Project GLOBE. In order to organize this large collection of dimensions, a clustering of dimensions proposed by Maleki and De Jong is also discussed.

Questions three and four are the subject of the interviews with practitioners at Atkins. Research questions five and six also follow from the results of the interviews, although less directly.

The final conclusions of this study will assess how cultural dimensions theory can be used by practitioners, and what can be done to facilitate this.

1.3 **SUMMARY OF THEORY**

Hofstede’s research at IBM and the cultural dimensions he extracted from it form the foundation of the theory used in this study. The initial dimensions extracted by Hofstede are Individualism, Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, and Masculinity. After collaborating with Michael Bond and Michael Minkov he added respectively the Long Term Orientation dimension and Indulgence vs Restraint.

The second researcher discussed in this study is Shalom Schwartz. Schwartz established seven categories of values; Hierarchy, Conservatism, Harmony, Egalitarian Commitment, Intellectual Autonomy, Affective Autonomy, and Mastery. Usually these are expressed in the dimensions Autonomy vs Conservatism, Hierarchy vs Egalitarian Commitment, and Mastery vs Harmony.
The work done by management consultants Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner is different. It focuses on qualitative dimensions that attempt to explain cultural differences in organizations, and provides insight for manager to avoid miscommunications. Their dimensions are Universalism vs Particularism, Individualism vs Collectivism, Achievement vs Ascription, Neutral vs Affective, Specific vs Diffuse, Internal vs External, and Sequential vs Synchronous.

A relatively straightforward two-dimensions model is proposed by Ronald Inglehart and Wayne Baker. Inglehart is the director of the World Value Survey, a large-scale quantitative study that has been carried out in 65 countries. Their dimensions are Traditional vs Secular-rational and Survival vs Self-expression.

Michael Minkov, mentioned earlier for his collaboration with Geert Hofstede, also contributed to the field with his own research. In a number of separate studies he proposed, among other, the dimensions of Monumentalism vs Flexumility and Industry vs Indulgence.

In a collaborative effort to study leadership and behavioral effectiveness in organizations, 170 researchers worked together on Project GLOBE. They proposed dimensions of Uncertainty Avoidance, Power Distance, Institutional Collectivism, In-group Collectivism, Assertiveness, Future Orientation, Performance Orientation, Humane Orientation, and Gender Egalitarianism. A unique aspect of this study is that they separate dimensions as they are (“as is”) from dimensions as they “should be”, focusing on the practices in a society and the respondents’ concept of an ideal society, respectively.

A clustering of the dimensions extracted by Hofstede, Schwartz, Trompenaars, Inglehart, Minkov, and Project GLOBE, is proposed by Maleki and De Jong. The consolidated the 30 different dimensions into nine clusters, with the dimensions spanning the individual clusters measuring approximately the same cultural traits. These clusters are used in this study for presenting the theory to the practitioners.

1.4 METHODOLOGY

The practitioners interviewed in this study all work for Atkins Aerospace, a multinational engineering services provider with offices in the United Kingdom, Germany, The Netherlands, India, and the United States. The respondents are separated into four groups based on the amount of work experience they have and the extent of their prior knowledge of cultural dimensions. A total of 20 practitioners is interviewed, each for approximately 30 to 45 minutes.

The interviews are loosely structured and are qualitative in nature. This is done to allow for greater flexibility and to be able to discuss the specific cultural experiences that all practitioners have. These experiences are then compared to the clusters of cultural dimensions from the theory.

1.5 REPORT OUTLINE

After this introduction, Chapter 2 starts with defining the definition of culture. This leads to a discussion on how culture can be measured, introducing the concept of cultural dimensions and some advantages of using this.
Chapter 3 is an overview of the existing literature on cultural dimensions. It covers the work of Geert Hofstede, Shalom Schwartz, Fons Trompenaars, Inglehart and Baker, Michael Minkov, and Project GLOBE. Each section includes an overview of the dimensions discovered by that particular researchers, and follows with a discussion on the relevance of the dimensions on the field of cross-cultural analysis. The literature study is concluded with an example of a clustering method proposed by Maleki and De Jong.

Chapter 4 presents the methodology of the interviews. The first section presents which dimensions will be used. Section 4.2 focuses on the interviewees themselves, including some background on the company they work for. The final section provides an overview of the interview questions.

The interviews themselves and the results are presented in Chapter 5. Each section covers one of the four interview items, and include the observations from the practitioners as well as some initial discussion on these subjects.

In Chapter 6 the report is concluded with the answer to the research questions. Section 6.2 summarizes all conclusions from this study and provides some recommendations for further research. The last section of this report covers reflections on the project and notes on what could have been done differently.
2. CONTEXT

This chapter introduces the concept of culture and describes the definition and scope of this concept as used throughout the report. The second part of the chapter is a discussion on how culture can be studied.

The objective of this chapter is to answer the following questions:

- What is culture?
- How can culture be studied?

2.1 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This section describes how culture is defined and what is considered in and out of scope of this study.

2.1.1 DEFINITION OF CULTURE

Etymologically, the English word culture originates from the Latin cultura, which is a derivative of the verb colere, meaning to tend or till. This literal translation is still used in, for example, the term agriculture (from agri-cultura: field tilling). The noun cultura, however, is associated with education and refinement. It is believed to refer to tilling of the mind, or character. This is reflected in modern English as well, with the word cultured usually referring to excellence in arts, letters, manners, scholarly pursuits, etc (dictionary.com, 2015).

The term culture as used in this study is not a single variable. It is a complex system that is used to describe a global phenomenon, describing the behavior of and interaction between people in a society. Geert Hofstede, one of the leading researchers in the field, considers culture to be the mental software of the mind (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010).

More scientific definitions are provided by Ronald Inglehart (1997), “Culture is a system of attitudes, values, and knowledge that is widely shared within a society”, and Fischer (2009), “Culture is typically defined as a collective phenomenon that is approximately shared among members of a society”. Brown (1991) defines culture as patterns that are passed on from generation to generation.

A common aspect from those definitions of culture is a focus on sharedness. A culture exists or emerges whenever a set of assumptions is shared by a group of people. There is no group of people that forms a society together but that does not have a culture. Creating shared rules, even unwritten, is a precondition for group survival. Moral, group-related emotions are universal and unavoidable (Minkov, 2013).

It is intuitively clear that descriptions of societies in terms of values or other characteristics do not do justice to all their members, because there is great individual variety in any society. However, there appears to be structure to this variety. By definition culture is a collective phenomenon. In the case of the individual we speak of personality, the subject of the study of psychology. One level up from culture is human nature, the inherited set of skills that all humans possess. See Figure 2-1 for a
The lack of a universal definition of culture may appear to be a potential problem for students of cross-cultural analysis, but pragmatically it really is a non-issue. According to Segall (1984), the goal of studying culture is not to enhance the concept’s clarity or attempt to articulate a universally acceptable definition. The focus should be on the improvement of mutual understanding between people from different societies, regardless of the academic definition used for the conceptualization of culture. A pragmatic approach is called for and the existing definitions more than suffice to take the next step and consider how culture can be measured. There is no reason why one abstract theoretical concept would be better than another, as long as the authors are clear about the definition they are using in their work. Culture can be pragmatically defined by the contents and boundaries of the interests of the scholars who study it (Minkov, 2013).

How culture is conceptualized and studied may depend on the constraining effect of a researcher’s personal cultural background. Extreme forms of this phenomenon are undesirable, but we have to learn to live with moderate manifestations of it and accept that there is no culture-free social science. Even the choice of a particular topic and the disregard of another may suggest individual preferences that are associated with values. The only practical note on this subject is that behaviors evidently should be studied as a part of culture, regardless of the definition or concept of culture that a researcher adheres to.

For the sake of consistency the definition from Hofstede will be used throughout this study, mainly due to its simplicity and lack of overly academic phrasing. This definition is easy to understand by both academic and casual readers. However, it is explicitly noted that there are various definitions in circulation and that none are inherently better or worse than others.

“Culture can be defined as the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another” – (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010, p.6)

Along with Hofstede’s definition of culture this report also adheres to his definition of values and practices. According to Hofstede (2010), culture manifests itself in symbols, heroes, rituals and values. The first three he calls practices and are manifested outside of individuals. These are the
visual part of culture. *Values*, on the other hand, are invisible, manifested *within* individuals, and represent what a person believes in. Because values are acquired so early in a person’s life, they often remain unconscious to those who hold them. Hofstede compares this to the layers of an onion (See Figure 2-2). Culture can change fast for the outer layers (practices) and new practices are learned throughout a lifetime. Values, however, are at the core of the onion and change slowly.

Not all researchers adhere to this terminology, resulting in potential confusion when comparing studies that use these terms for other aspects of culture. Where possible this report will stick with the definitions provided by Hofstede. It will be specifically stated when another study uses a different terminology.

![Figure 2-2: The "Onion": Manifestations of Culture at Different Levels of Depth (Hofstede, 2010, p.8)](image)

### 2.1.2 National Culture

In this study and in the studies that are referenced, culture often refers to *national culture*. This implies that the group element in the definition of culture is associated with a country. However, it is clear that nations are not necessarily homogeneous and discrete entities, and can therefore not always be treated as such. Some cultures spread multiple countries and some countries are torn between two or more cultures, or have large subcultures. Consider for example disintegrated nations such as Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, or multilingual countries like Belgium, Switzerland or Canada. Having said this, classification by national boundaries is often the only feasible criterion. It is immensely easier to obtain data for nations than for any other homogeneous societies.

Aside from the convenience argument, another reason to stick to the concept of national cultures is that the nation remains a key unit of shared experience, and its educational and cultural institutions shape the values of almost everyone in that society (Minkov, 2013). Even if nations are *not* homogeneous, they are treated that way by politicians, economists, and international organizations. For this reason validation is only possible at the nation-level. GDP, economic growth, corruption indices, murder rates, and many other external variables, are only expressed as national statistics. Obtaining this data for any other uniform group of people would be a tremendous effort, if at all possible.

An interesting alternative is the comparison of supra-national cultures (or *civilizations*), for example Islamic or Western culture, as studied by Samuel Huntington (1996). Fundamentally this is a form of clustering. The appeal of this approach is simplification, but it should be noted that there are
historical reasons for those countries to be independent entities. Often conflicting cultures were at the root of these break-ups. In the end, nations are a political reality, whether we like it or not. The culture of a large group of people is complex and is bound to exhibit some diversity in values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors. However, choosing a higher or lower level of analysis is not more logical. No group is absolutely uniform.

The most common critique of national dimensions is the within-nation variance of values and the existence of subcultures. Specifically religious subcultures have been used as examples. However, most critics do not consider the directionality of this. It could be that religious subcultures, much like political movements, are actually a manifestation of already existing values in a society. Additionally, Inglehart and Baker (2000) showed from data based on the World Value Survey that the differences between values held by members of different religions within given societies are much smaller than cross-national differences. This will be discussed in more detail in Section 3.4.
2.2 **HOW TO STUDY CULTURE?**

The study of culture is inherently linked to how one defines it. Now that a common definition is established, this section addresses some relevant considerations with regard to the study of culture.

2.2.1 **THE OBJECTIVE OF CULTURAL STUDIES**

The main task of a social science should be the same as for any other science: the construction of empirically supported models for practical purposes. Despite that the presentation of a study must be scientifically acceptable, it needs to be recognized that the goal is to provide value to someone. This requires practical solutions, ideally in an easily digestible form. The primary goal of culturology should therefore be to give its consumers models that aid them in dealing with cultural diversity. This can be done by enabling them to make quantifiable predictions, the simplest of which take the form, “If country A is characterized by cultural trait $x$, we can also expect it to exhibit trait $y$.” (Minkov, 2013)

These prediction models need to be backed up by reliable data and explained by a sensible theory, but the theory should not exist for its own sake. A model that does not predict anything about the differences between two or more groups of people based on their cultural differences is not useful. The objective is not to find one true and right model that explains all the cultures of the world; it is to develop models, explained by theory, that are practically useful. As proclaimed by Michal Minkov (2013), there is a need for pragmatism in this field and the search for absolute truth may be a distraction from the actual goal. There is no perfect method that leads to an ultimate cultural model, but there are useful models that explain in a satisfactory way some of the cultural differences between some nations.

2.2.2 **MEASURING CULTURE**

To compare cultures they need to be measured. A common method to measure elements of culture that are assumed to have a universal nature is to collect self-reports. The assumption is that all societies in the world can be compared on those concepts, because they make sense everywhere. As shown by Hofstede’s onion approach from the previous section, *values* are the stable element of culture, whereas *practices* such as rituals, heroes and symbols change over time. When measuring culture the focus should therefore be on value systems.

Values are usually studied by asking people what is important to them in their own lives and how important something is. This results in a collection of *individual values*. The most common method to obtain *national values* is to aggregate the individual responses for each country.

Alternatively, one can ask individuals what values *should be* important, often called ‘values as the desirable’ (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010; Knafo, Roccas, & Sagiv, 2011). These are norms or ideologies as to what people in a society *should* value or how they *should* behave. The problem with this is that values that people endorse at a personal level are not necessarily the same as those they view as desirable for others. For example when someone reports that he or she values honesty, chances are that this person holds this as an individual value for him- or herself, and also as a national value for others. However, an individual that strives for power would not benefit from other individuals doing the same thing, and may therefore state subordinateship or obedience as a desired value in his or her society, but not for him- or herself.
It is also risky to ask someone directly which characteristics other people in his or her nation would value, as this type of question is very prone to answers that reflect national stereotypes. Stereotypes are defined as “attributes thought to be characteristic of a group or contrasting groups” and stereotyping as “attributing to each individual in a group the features that are viewed as inherent in group membership” (Minkov, 2013). The defining feature of a stereotype is its operationalization as a general statement about a complex entity, such as a nation or a society. Although a study of national stereotypes could provide very interesting results, this is generally not what researchers are looking for in a survey of individual values.

Asking respondents about norms or ideologies they appreciate in others – whether or not this overlaps with values they consider acceptable for themselves – is not a self-report in the literal sense, but it could clearly reveal useful information about the respondents themselves as well. For example “women should be subservient to men” is a norm or ideology about the desirable behavior of women and men other than the respondent, but it speaks volumes about the respondent who enunciated it. (Minkov, 2013)

Another relevant consideration with regard to norms is how they are enforced. If a society strictly enforces some norm, for example by punishing disobedience to it, the norm clearly represents a value that is held by a large group of people in that society. This further blurs the distinction between norms and values, and highlights the earlier statement that strict definitions are not the solution to understanding cultural diversity.

It can be difficult to decide what information a statement about a group of people carries and whether the information reveals more about those who make the statement or those whom it describes. Although it is important to recognize the importance of phrasing, it is however of little practical use to endlessly debate the theoretical difference between personal and societal values. As long as a researcher clearly defines his or her own interpretation and consistently sticks to it, it matters little which definition is more “correct”. The goal is to obtain meaningful information about societies and to somehow quantify this. Whether this is based on aggregated individual values or on something else is irrelevant, as long as the resulting data has interesting and important correlates and as long as we do not use intentionally confusing terminologies.

2.2.3 Theory versus Empiricism
As in any field of study, cross-cultural analysis lends itself to a deductive and an inductive approach. In a deductive study a theoretical model is conceived of first, followed by empirical work and subsequently testing of the model’s validity. An example of a deductive cross-cultural study is Project GLOBE. When the inductive approach is used, data is collected without a strict theoretical formulation a priori. This is for example what Geert Hofstede did.

Some members of the scientific community look down on the inductive approach and insist on a need for theory-driven research, as the post-hoc interpretation of cross-cultural data supposedly increases the risk of overlooking and missing important cultural processes (Fischer, 2009). Others, including Minkov (2013), argue the opposite, claiming that inventing a theoretical construct before collecting any data creates the danger of believing that a particular abstract model is real and exists in the real world.
In the end none of this should matter, as it is only a model’s ability to accurately and consistently predict real-life cultural differences that determines its value. Both theory-driven and empirical approaches have advantages and disadvantages, and as long as a research is aware of those there is no reason why one would be better than the other. A sensible pre-existing theory can provide a researcher with a guideline through his work, which can help keep the process organized. On the other hand this researcher must be willing to abandon his theory if it cannot be supported by empirical data. In this respect culturology is no different from other social sciences.

2.2.4 COMPARING CULTURES
When studying cultures, researchers generally distinguish between a discrete approach and a dimensional approach. Both methods are used to organize complex data, in this case cultural differences between nations, in such a way that the human mind can make better sense of it. Both are therefore valid interpretations of cultural differences between nations.

The discrete approach assumes a discrete, *typological* classification of cultures. This implies a structure wherein all cultures are qualitatively and categorically different and placed in mutually exclusive categories. A nation cannot be a combination of multiple cultures and there is no classification of *to what extent* a nation belongs to a certain culture. This approach originates from the natural sciences, where it is very popular and has produced convincing results. An example of a discrete approach to describing cultural differences is the terminology First, Second and Third World to describe respectively capitalist, communist, and former colonial countries; or the distinction between “The East” and “The West”.

**FIGURE 2-3: TYPOLOGICAL VERSUS DIMENSIONAL APPROACH**

In the dimensional approach the differences between cultures are assumed to be gradual. The levels of a measure can be imagined as different points along a single continuum, called a *dimension*. This is conceptually similar to a physical measure of length or height. A number of different dimensions can be established, each describing different phenomena related to measures of the subject of interest. Examples of the dimensional approach in cross-cultural studies are Hofstede’s four dimensions, or the work done by Project GLOBE. For the comparison of cultures in modern societies the dimensional approach is much more common than the typological approach.

While typologies are easy to understand, they prove problematic in empirical research. Most countries are not just one single type and cannot be classified as belonging exclusively to a single typology. Dimension scores allow for an index to rank an item in between two extreme poles of a dimension. As long as the dimensions is accepted and backed up by statistical research, countries
can be compared along this dimension to determine to what extent they possess certain traits or characteristics. However, this is not to say that typologies are useless and only the dimensional approach should be used. Typologies and dimensions can be complementary. A balance needs to be struck between the apparent simplicity of typologies and the statistical basis of dimensions.

2.2.5 CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

The concept of cultural dimensions emerged in the 1950s. Parsons and Shils (1951) suggested five pattern variables that should operate at both the individual and the societal levels. Edward Hall (1959) conceptualized the popular cultural dimensions high context and low context, and in 1961 Kluckhohn and Strodbeck (1961) proposed several value dimensions that could be used to characterize human societies. The first large empirical study that described dimensions of culture and produced usable indices (country measures) for societies was done by Geert Hofstede (1980, 2001).

Hofstede (2010) defines a dimension as an aspect of a culture that can be measured relative to other cultures. Each country is represented by a score on each dimension, from 0 to 100. A dimension groups together a number of phenomena in a society that were empirically found to occur in combination, regardless of whether there seems to be a logical necessity for their going together. Ideally a set of correlates is taken that makes sense, as this is easier to comprehend and makes it easier to develop a theory around the statistical correlation. However, the logic of societies is not always the same as the logic of individuals looking at them.

Grouping of different aspects of dimensions should always be based on statistical relationships. This implies that there is a trend for these aspects to occur in combination, not an iron link or guarantee that they will always occur together. There will always be numerous individuals in a society to which the average cultural traits of that society do not apply.

Index scores for one dimension can be represented along a line, while two dimensions can be shown in a diagram with each axis representing a dimension. Three dimensions can be represented in 3D space, although this will be slightly more challenging to read and interpret. Four dimensions or more are difficult if not impossible to represent graphically. This is a disadvantage of the dimensions model, particularly in comparison to the typologies approach that is relatively simple to visualize.

Michael Minkov (2013, p.128-129) lists the following advantages of the use of dimensions to represent cultural differences between countries, assuming the dimensions are properly extracted and make sense conceptually:

1. Dimensions of culture reduce the enormous record of observed cultural differences in the world to a small number of imaginary variables that help us make sense of the seemingly unfathomable complexity across the globe. They highlight cultural regularities and broad patterns that would otherwise remain invisible or obscure.
2. Dimensions of culture explain the similarity between the variables that define them. They can be conceptualized as the invisible glue that holds together seemingly unrelated social phenomena.

3. Dimensions of culture have predictive properties with respect to external variables. Although dimensions of culture are not, strictly speaking, determinants of what they predict, it is often possible to conceptualize them as factors that are instrumental in the occurrence of various social phenomena and are therefore in a hypothetical cause-and-effect relationship with them.

4. Dimensions of culture highlight differences and similarities between countries. They can be used to assess cultural distances (albeit roughly and probabilistically) and draw cultural maps of the world.

**Constructing Dimensions**

The simplest approach to construct, or extract, a dimension from a data set is to select a few strongly correlated variables of interest and merge them into a single dimension. The relationships between the other variables and the selected ones are disregarded. A more complex approach is to establish the dimensionality created by all variables in a data set. Various statistical analysis tools can be used to extract dimensions in this way from large sets.

Dimensions can be constructed at different levels and units of analysis. An *individual dimension* is constructed from variables that correlate at the individual level, hence the unit of analysis is the individual. Examples are the Big Five personality traits (Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism). Dimensions created at the group level are often called *ecological dimensions*, or *national dimensions* when the selected group is a nation. For group level dimensions either the individual variables are aggregated to the ecological level to find the average of a measure, or variables are used that only make sense at the ecological level (e.g. murder rates, suicide rates, HIV rates, road death tolls, socioeconomic inequality). Once we have national scores of a variable of interest we forget about the individuals: the group (e.g. the nation) becomes an individual case.

A confusion of the two levels of analysis is often seen in criticism on dimensional models. When the relationship of a set of variables correlates at both the individual and the ecological level, it is called *isomorphism*. When isomorphism is incorrectly assumed – i.e. correlation at the individual level is assumed due to correlation that is found at the ecological level or vice versa – this is called an *ecological fallacy* (Minkov 2013). However, there is no ground to assume isomorphism unless shown otherwise by empirical data. It is entirely possible that a positive correlation at one level of analysis may be negative at another level. Alternatively, a construct that is operationalized at one level of analysis may be meaningless at another level. Consider for example the ecological concept of economic inequality, which does not have an equivalent individual-level construct. It further adds to the confusion that some researchers use the same labels for constructs that are operationalized in different ways, even when there is no evidence of isomorphism.

2.2.6 Final Considerations

It has been mentioned previously, but is important enough to repeat here one more time: Dimensions are human constructs and *do not exist in reality*. They are defined by their creators, using subjectively preferred statistical tools, and become invalid if taken out of context and
compared to completely different constructs that may have been operationalized in a completely different manner.

Michael Minkov (2013, p.131-132) provides the following overview of why dimensions are subjective human constructs:

- The selection of samples for the construction of a dimension is subjective:
  Expansions, reductions, or alterations of the sample may produce similar or different dimensions. Objectivity in sample selection is impossible to define and achieve.
- The selection of items for the construction of a dimension is subjective:
  The addition or removal of a single variable could be sufficient to generate an entirely new solution. Whether this variable should or should not be included in the analysis can never be a fully objective decision.
- The selection of the number of dimensions is subjective:
  The number of dimensions is potentially unlimited. Deciding how many dimensions to extract from a database is a subjective exercise.
- The selection of the nature of dimensions is subjective:
  One of the most important choices in the construction or extraction of dimensions is to decide what the dimensions should be about. This is a subjective choice.

In the end dimensional models are a form of data reduction. A database with complex information is summarized for simplicity by grouping variables that are strongly correlated. Some intercorrelation between dimensions is acceptable, as it can help understand the interrelatedness of various elements of culture. However, highly correlated factors create a redundancy problem. They measure more or less the same construct and should therefore be combined into one dimension. On the other extreme, factors with no correlations at all are useless, because they have no predictive properties. Deciding if and how exactly factors should be related to each other is a form of art that requires considerable experience with large databases. Ultimately, the solution should be governed by practical considerations. Good factors are those that are easy to interpret, are not too similar to each other, and have strong predictive properties with respect to important external variables.
3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the existing literature on cross-cultural analysis, focusing on the theories that are useful for practitioners. A selection has been made of authors that contributed significantly to the field. They will be discussed in separate sections of this chapter, each with their take on cultural dimensions and the contributions of their model.

The first section describes the work done by Geert Hofstede and his dimensions of cultural differences that inspired many others. Section 3.2 focuses on Shalom Schwartz, presenting his research and the dimensions he extracted. The third section summarizes a collection of studies related to the work of Fons Trompenaars. It introduces the seven-dimensions model that he authored with Charles Hampden-Turner, as well as research done by Peter Smith using Trompenaars’ database. Section 3.4 describes the World Value Survey and the dimensions extracted from this survey by Inglehart and Baker. The research and dimensions of Michael Minkov, including his contributions to Hofstede’s work, is the subject of Section 3.5. This is followed by Section 3.6 on the Project GLOBE collective and the work of House et al.

Section 3.7 presents a clustering of dimensions proposed by Maleki and De Jong. This reduces the large collection of dimensions from various authors to a more manageable set of nine clusters. These clusters will form the basis for the dimensions presented to practitioners later in this research project.

Many others have made meaningful contributions to the field of cross-cultural analysis. The researchers listed above have been chosen either because they were the first to introduce a certain subject, or because their dimensions are particularly useful or interesting. An excellent overview of a larger collection of literature is Michael Minkov’s “Cross-Cultural Analysis, The Science and Art of Comparing the World’s Modern Societies and Their Cultures” (2013).

Each section ends with a discussion of its relevance to the field of cross-cultural analysis in general and to this research project in particular. Dimensions will be judged based on their usefulness to practitioners.
3.1 HOFSTEDE

As discussed in Chapter 2, Geert Hofstede is widely recognized as the pioneer of the dimensional approach in the field of cross-cultural comparison. During his work for IBM in the 1960s and 70s – where he was in charge of conducting employee opinion surveys for local IBM subsidiaries – Hofstede found stable and predictable differences in answer patterns across countries. This led him to believe in differences in basic values, a phenomenon that he later explained with his dimensional model.

In his first book, Culture’s Consequences (1980), Hofstede cast doubt on the universal validity of established theories in cross-cultural analysis. This book was intended for scholarly readership and formed the basis for the popular first edition of Cultures & Organizations (1991), meant for lay readerships and a much wider audience. A later edition of the book, co-authored by Hofstede’s son Gert-Jan and the Bulgarian researcher Michael Minkov, added two new dimensions to the existing model and provided data on many more countries. The object of the book is stated as “to help in dealing with differences in thinking, feeling and acting of people around the globe” (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010, p.4).

3.1.1 RESEARCH APPROACH

Hofstede’s dimensions were extracted from the IBM survey data collected in (initially) forty countries, without any pre-existing notion about what would be found. In line with the terminology established in Chapter 2 this was an empiricism-before-theory study, where the empirical data was obtained first, following by the formulation of a theory based on this data. A post-hoc theoretical foundation that Hofstede refers to (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010, p.29) is the work of anthropologists Inkeles and Levinson (1969). They state that all societies, both modern and traditional, face the following basic problems (Benedict, 1959; Mead, 1962; Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010):

- Relation to authority
- Conception of Self – in particular:
  - Relationship between individual and society
  - Individual’s concept of masculinity and femininity
- Ways of dealing with conflict, including the control of aggression and expression of feelings

Hofstede claims that the difference between societies is how they deal with these universal problems.

From one country to another, the IBM survey data represents almost perfectly matched samples, similar in all respects except nationality. A statistical analysis of the answers to the survey questions averaged by country confirmed the link between the basic societal problems from Inkeles and Levinson, and the following four dimensions extracted from the IBM database by Hofstede:

1. Power Distance
2. Collectivism versus Individualism
3. Femininity versus Masculinity
4. Uncertainty Avoidance
Each of these terms existed already in the social sciences, but had never been applied to the quantitative study of national differences between cultures before. Hofstede himself and other researchers later confirmed the survey data from the IBM questionnaire by administering the same and similar surveys to different samples.

Despite the apparent predictive properties of these four dimensions, a disadvantage of the IBM data was its Western bias. Hofstede wondered whether a different questionnaire, written by researchers that hold different values, would reveal any new dimensions. Based on the work from Michael Bond (Bond et al., 2004) at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hofstede added a fifth dimension to his model:

5. Long Term versus Short Term Orientation

When the latest version of Cultures & Organization was written, Hofstede gained access to the data from the World Value Survey, a much larger database than the IBM questionnaires used in his original work. Based on this data and his collaboration with Michael Minkov, Hofstede added a sixth dimension:

6. Indulgence versus Restraint

3.1.2 ANALYSIS

This section describes in more detail Hofstede’s original four dimensions and the long term orientation dimension derived from the Chinese Value Survey. The Indulgence dimension will be discussed in Section 3.5 on Michael Minkov.

POWER DISTANCE

The power distance dimension is about inequality in a society. It is associated with the ‘relation to authority’ item in the list of basic societal problems from Inkeles and Levinson described in Section 3.1.1. Hofstede defines the Power Distance Index (PDI) as: “The extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally.” (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010).

The scale is formed by the following items from the IBM survey:

- Non-managerial employees’ perception that employees were afraid to disagree with their managers
- In a choice between five styles of management, subordinates’ perception that their boss tended to take decisions in an autocratic or a persuasive/paternalistic way
- In a choice between four styles of management, subordinates’ preference to work for a manager whose style is autocratic, persuasive/paternalistic, or democratic, but not consultative

Across individuals these three items are unrelated, but there is strong correlation in their respective country averages. This implies that an individual may score high on one item and low on another, while when a country averages high on one item it is likely to also have a high average on the other two.
Power distance is about *dependence relationships* in a country. In small-power-distance countries there is little dependence between people, for example between subordinates and bosses or between parents and children. There is generally a preference for consultation (a form of *interdependence*) and the emotional distance between people is relatively small. In large-power-distance countries there is a considerable dependence of subordinates on bosses and of children on their parents. In such societies the emotional distance is large.

Note that power distance does not measure the degree of inequality in a society; it reflects how subordinates handle the fact that people are unequal. The power distance dimension is described based on the value system of the less powerful members of a relationship.

The focus is on the relation to authority, not on the form of leadership. Regardless of management style, leadership or authority can only exist when complemented by ‘subordinateship’ or obedience. There is no known systematic difference in effectiveness of low versus high power distance. Both are good at different tasks and the strength of the local cultures should be utilized to achieve maximum efficiency in an organization.

**INDIVIDUALISM**

The individualism dimension is about the position of the individual and the collective in a society. It is one of the two dimensions that are associated with the ‘conception of self’ item from Inkeles and Levinson, referring to how an individual looks at him- or herself in relation to the society. Hofstede defines this dimension as follows: “*Individualism pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after him- or herself and his or her immediate family. Collectivism pertains to societies in which people from birth onward are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people’s lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty.*” (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010).

The IBM questionnaire contains a set of 14 questions about employees’ personal goals, each goal scoring from 1 (‘of utmost importance to me’) to 5 (‘of very little or no importance’). The absolute importance of scores is irrelevant; the information is in the relative importance of each goal versus the 13 others. Analysis of the country averaged scores produces two factors, one of them resulting in the individualism dimension and the other associated with the masculinity dimension, to be discussed in the next section. The following goals were highly positively and negatively correlated with individualism:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive correlation / Individualism</th>
<th>Negative correlation / Collectivism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Personal time</td>
<td>• Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Freedom</td>
<td>• Physical conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Challenge</td>
<td>• Use of skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Benefits</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The three goals associated with individualism stress the respondent’s independence from the organization. They reflect the individual’s personal involvement. The four goals associated with collectivism stress what the organization provides to the individual.

The individualism index is strongly correlated to national wealth and with the power distance index. However, when controlling for wealth (comparing rich with rich and poor with poor), the correlation...
between individualism and power distance drops significantly (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010; Minkov, 2013).

The term individualism refers here to societies and not to individual members of a society. This is slightly confusing, but it is an important distinction. Hofstede’s individualism index shows no correlation with selfishness, self-reliance, or a preference for team work versus individual action. None of those measures correlate with national wealth.

**MASculinity**

The masculinity index (MAS) is about the desirability of assertive behavior versus modest behavior. Like individualism, masculinity is associated with the ‘conception of self’ item from the basic problems list. In the literature, and also throughout this report, the terms masculine/feminine are used for social, culturally determined roles, whereas male/female will be used for biological distinction. Hofstede defines the masculinity dimension as: “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. A society is called feminine when emotional gender roles overlap: both men and women are supposed to be modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life.” (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010).

As described in the section on individualism, the masculinity dimension was found using factor analysis on the relative importance of 14 personal goals. The following goals are associated with the masculine and feminine poles of this dimension:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive correlation / Femininity</th>
<th>Negative correlation / Masculinity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Relationship with manager</td>
<td>• Earnings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Cooperation</td>
<td>• Recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Desirable living area</td>
<td>• Advancement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Employment security</td>
<td>• Challenge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Hofstede, the four goals associated with femininity stress relationships and the quality of life; the four goals associated with masculinity stress the respondent’s ego.

Masculinity vs. femininity is the only dimension in which men and women among IBM employees scored consistently differently. The gender difference was smaller in more feminine societies. This implies that in masculine societies males hold more masculine values than females, whereas in feminine societies both males and females hold more feminine values.

Another difference between the masculinity index and the previous dimensions is that the masculinity index is unrelated to national wealth or degree of economic development. In other dimensions the association with wealth implicitly justifies that one pole may be better than other; in the masculinity versus femininity dimensions this is not the case. Japan and Sweden are both wealthy, but their respective MAS indices are 95 (rank 2) and 5 (rank 76). Venezuela and Costa Rica have similar, relatively low, GDPs; their respective indices are 73 (rank 5) and 21 (rank 69) (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010).
Uncertainty Avoidance

The Uncertainty Avoidance index (UAI) describes a society’s tolerance of the ambiguous and the unpredictable. It relates to the ‘way of dealing with conflict’ item in the list of basic societal problems. In high-UAI countries, extreme ambiguity creates an intolerable anxiety. This is usually alleviated (either consciously or subconsciously) through technology, law and religion; and expressed through nervous stress and a need for written and unwritten rules. Hofstede defines the uncertainty dimensions as: “The extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations.” (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010).

Originally UAI was found as a by-product of power distance. However, across all countries differences were unrelated to power distance. The following survey items correlate strongly and form one pole of the uncertainty avoidance dimension:

- Rule orientation: Agreement with the statement “Company rules should not be broken – even when the employee thinks it is in the company’s best interest”
- Employee stability: Employees’ statement that they intended to continue with the company until retirement or at least more than five years, rather than from two to five years or for two years at the most
- Stress, as expressed in the mean answer to the question “How often do you feel nervous or tense at work”, ranging from 1 (‘I always feel this way’) to 5 (‘I never feel this way’)

Although the association of these three items is not intuitively obvious, Hofstede argues that all three are societal reactions to ambiguity. It measures a need for structure rather than ways of dealing with power. As in the power distance dimension, the three items are unrelated across individuals. Only when the country averages are calculated a pattern appears and the items correlate to form a single dimension.

Uncertainty avoidance should not be confused with risk avoidance. Risk is focused on something specific, often expressed as the probability of a particular event happening. Uncertainty has no object and no probability attached to it. Uncertainty avoidance in a society does not lead to reducing risk; it leads to a reduction of ambiguity. Societies that score high on the uncertainty avoidance index look for structure.

Long Term Orientation

As discussed previously, Hofstede’s initial work assumed four cultural dimensions. However, Hofstede realized that the questionnaire his data was based on was a Western product and may have omitted questions related to constructs that do not exist in the Western mind.

This issue was addressed by Michael Bond, a Canadian researcher inspired by Hofstede. Bond encouraged a team of Chinese researchers to develop a survey based on Chinese values and to administer this survey to samples from different countries (Bond et al., 2004). A list of 40 values was presented to the respondents, with the instruction to indicate how important each item was to them on a scale from 9 (‘supreme importance’) to 1 (‘no importance at all’). After elimination of response bias a factor analysis resulted in four factors, each forming a dimension. Two of those (‘integration’ and ‘moral discipline’) correlated strongly with Hofstede’s individualism and power distance, and the third one (‘human heartedness’) correlated with Hofstede’s masculinity. The fourth dimension (‘Confucian work dynamism’) was new and did not correlate significantly with any of Hofstede’s
dimensions. It did, however, correlate strongly with economic growth. The following goals are associated with this dimension:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive correlation / Long-Term Orientation</th>
<th>Negative correlation / Short-Term Orientation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Persistence (Perseverance)</td>
<td>• Personal steadiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ordering relationships</td>
<td>• Protecting ‘face’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Thrift</td>
<td>• Respect for tradition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Having a sense of shame</td>
<td>• Reciprocation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov (2010) replicated the Confucian work dynamism dimension and relabeled it long-term orientation. Hofstede defined this dimension as: “Long-term orientation stands for the fostering of virtues oriented toward future rewards – in particular perseverance and thrift. It’s opposite, short-term orientation, stands for the fostering of virtues related to the past and present – in particular respect for tradition, preservation of face and fulfilling social obligations.”

Hofstede shows that LTO is a significant predictor of average national achievement in education and economic development. In a later study Minkov and Hofstede (2012) made a selection of World Value Survey items that they believed would replicate LTO. They performed a factor analysis on the preference for thrift, perseverance, religious faith, face, and reciprocation, as desirable traits for children. The result was indeed a factor that was strongly reminiscent of LTO, as well as a second, weaker factor that reflects a focus on a cohesive family.

**Indulgence versus Restraint**

The indulgence versus restraint dimension is about happiness, or in more scientific terms, subjective well-being. Like the LTO dimension, this dimension was added by Hofstede in a later version of his work. It was initially extracted by Michael Minkov from the World Value Survey.

Hofstede’s definition of the indulgence versus restraint dimension is: “Indulgence stands for a tendency to allow relatively free gratification of basic and natural human desires related to enjoying life and having fun. Its opposite, restraint, reflects a conviction that such gratification needs to be curbed and regulated by strict social norms.” The dimensions will be discussed in more detail in Section 3.5 on Michael Minkov.
3.1.3 DISCUSSION

Geert Hofstede’s contribution to the study of cultures across nations is invaluable, mainly for his groundbreaking work on the dimensional approach. His dimensions are useful constructs and they are backed by a good database and strong statistical correlations with external variables, but they are by no means a universal truth. This section will consider some of the most prevalent criticism on Hofstede’s work and discuss its applicability to the interviews with practitioners in this research project.

INDIVIDUALISM
The individualism dimension quantitatively explains the differences between rich and developing countries in terms of personal values. The significant correlation with a number of external variables and statistics, as well as a sensible theoretical background, makes individualism a strong dimension of national culture.

Although the directionality between individualism and national wealth is complex, it is evident that a preference for universalism, a relatively small in-group, and a focus on self-actualization correlate with higher (national) wealth. It seems probable that the directionality acts in both ways, with individualism partially leading to increased wealth and increased wealth leading to a more individualistic lifestyle.

POWER DISTANCE
The power distance dimension correlates strongly with low individualism, as noted by Hofstede himself. It can therefore be argued that they partly measure the same phenomenon and that they could be combined into a single dimension. There are two good reasons for not doing this. First of all, as shown by Hofstede (2010) and Minkov (2013), the correlation becomes significantly weaker when controlling for wealth. Secondly, there is a clear conceptual difference between the two dimensions. It has been argued in Chapter 2 that when extracting a dimension there needs to be a clear coherence between the survey items that span a dimension. In the individualism and power distance dimension this is clearly the case and they form dimensions that are both intuitive and sensible.

UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE
In the case of the uncertainty avoidance dimension the statistical association is more difficult to explain. This dimension spans items related to rule orientation, employee stability and stress, but how these three form one coherent dimension is ambiguous. It is clear from Hofstede’s data that there exists a correlation between the measures, but “the glue between the items” – a requirement of good dimensions that was discussed in Section 2.4 – is missing.

Note that there is nothing wrong with the concept of uncertainty avoidance. It is argued here that the survey items that Hofstede uses are not clearly associated with the definition of UAI, but the idea of a dimension that explains how different cultures react to ambiguity has high face validity. There must however be a better way to measure this phenomenon.

MASCULINITY
A similar problem exists in the definition of the masculinity dimension. Aside from the unfortunate labels, the four personal goals that span each pole seem only loosely intercorrelated at best, and are
hardly each other’s opposites. This is highlighted by the somewhat confusing country scores they produce, for example a cluster of Arab countries scoring lower – i.e. more feminine – than Belgium, Germany, and the United States.

A potential solution that Hofstede describes and dismisses (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010) is to split the masculinity vs. femininity dimension up into two parts, a high versus low ‘masculinity’ and a high versus low ‘femininity’. In a sense this is what Shalom Schwartz did with his mastery and harmony dimensions (See Section 3.2). Maleki and De Jong (2014) propose an alternative solution where masculinity versus femininity is split up into three separate dimensions, labeled mastery, assertiveness and gender egalitarianism.

**LONG-TERM ORIENTATION**

The same reasoning applies to the long-term orientation dimension. The terms long-term and short-term orientation do not follow logically from the items selected in this dimension, and the survey items do not appear to be opposites of each other. As discussed above, this could be solved by removing the bipolarity of the dimension and expressing the extent of long term orientation and short term orientation (from high to low) as two separate dimensions. Whether this would actually result in sensible country scores and correlations with external data is unknown.

Of the four items on the long-term orientation pole, the only one that matches Hofstede’s conceptualization of this dimension is thrift. This item has the lowest factor loading in the dimension (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010; Maleki and De Jong, 2014). Furthermore, even the factor of thrift is a weak indicator of future orientation, as this trait could also be related to survival factors.

It appears that long-term orientation actually measures traditional stability, instead of an orientation for the long-term or the future. This would explain why Russia and other former communist countries score so high, while Nordic countries score low (Maleki and De Jong, 2014). Project GLOBE proposes a dimension labeled future orientation that is conceptually very similar Hofstede’s description of LTO, but with country scores that have much higher face validity. This will be discussed in more detail in Section 3.6.

**RELEVANCE**

Hofstede’s dimensions of individualism and power distance are intuitive dimensions that have a solid statistical background. Despite that there appears to be some correlation between the two, both are expected to resonate well with the practitioners in this study. Uncertainty avoidance, masculinity, and long-term orientation are expected to be more problematic. Each of these dimensions appears to measure something real, but issues with the survey items (for uncertainty avoidance, the conceptualization for masculinity), or both (for long-term orientation), will be stumbling blocks in explaining these constructs to practitioners. Section 4.1 describes in greater detail how these dimensions will be discussed during the interviews.
3.2 SCHWARTZ

Shalom Schwartz is an Israeli cross-cultural psychologist and a leading researcher on cultural values. He developed his own value survey based on 56 value items that he deemed to be recognizable in all cultures and associated with goals that all humans must pursue (Schwartz, 2011).

In the 1980s and -90s Schwartz administered his survey in a sufficient number of countries to study culture at the ecological level, “following the lead of Geert Hofstede” (Schwartz, 2011, p.308: Minkov p.225). Schwartz intended to check on the reliability of Hofstede’s dimensions, hypothesizing that he would find either support, a need to refine them, or a set of different dimensions of national culture.

3.2.1 RESEARCH APPROACH

The Schwartz Values Survey was administered to schoolteachers and university students in 41 cultural groups from 38 nations. Contrary to Hofstede, Schwartz developed a theory before performing any statistical analysis on his data. Some of his dimensions are based on Hofstede – and therefore on his statistical approach – but as Schwartz developed a theory before doing his own statistical research this is considered a theory-before-empiricism approach, as defined in Section 2. Schwartz hypothesized the existence of the following value systems and dimensions:

Autonomy versus conservatism

Schwartz recognized the existence of a dimension that measures individualism versus collectivism, but unlike Hofstede he claimed that this dimension should be refined into more specific types of values in order to reduce confusion. He labeled this dimension autonomy versus conservatism. The expectation was to find cultures where the person is viewed as an autonomous entity on one pole (the “individualism” pole), and cultures where individuals are part of the social fabric on the opposite (similar to “collectivism”) (Schwartz 1994).

The autonomy pole was further split up in affective autonomy and intellectual autonomy. They have in common that in these cultures members would relate to others in terms of self-interest and negotiated agreements, with the society endorsing values that favor individual thought. Affective autonomy was associated with the values pleasure, varied life, exciting life, and enjoying life; whereas the intellectual autonomy was associated with the values creativity, broad-minded, and curious.

On the conservatism pole would be cultures where the significance of the individual should derive from his or her participation in and identification with the group. This is associated with values that emphasize property and harmony in interpersonal relationships, such as moderate, social order, and reciprocation of favors.
Power

For his second dimension Schwartz believed that there is a culture-level value system that reflects the way societies manage interdependencies and consideration for the welfare of others. Schwartz also recognized that the power pole of this hypothesized dimension would be related to conservatism in a manner similar to the correlation that Hofstede showed between his collectivism and power distance. Despite the similarities in conservatism and power, Schwartz expected a distinction between the two for abstract theoretical reasons: “because I define the latter (conservatism) in terms of embeddedness in group rather than in terms of individual versus group interests” (Schwartz, 1994).

Mastery

The third dimension that Schwartz believed he would find relates to a culture-level value type that emphasizes actively mastering the environment and changing the world, expressed in values such as success, ambition, and daring. He called this dimension mastery, and expected it to be associated with Hofstede’s masculinity dimension. Schwartz also hypothesized an association between mastery and power (Schwartz, 1994).

Harmony

Schwartz’ fourth and final hypothesized dimension is associated with values that express concern for the welfare of others and emphasize harmony with nature. Related values from the SVS are social justice, equality, and protecting the environment. This dimension was expected to resemble Hofstede’s femininity dimension (Schwartz, 1994). Schwartz believed that mastery and harmony are separate dimensions, and not opposite poles of the same dimensions (as was noted in the discussion on Hofstede’s masculinity dimension).

3.2.2 Analysis

Schwartz expected the relative importance of the items of his value survey across countries to be divided along the hypothesized dimensions described above. However, through examination of each value’s correlation pattern with other values Schwartz determined that not all of his original values had the same meaning in all cultures. This reduces his set of 56 values to 45 values for which he found consistent meanings across all cultures in his study. These 45 are grouped into seven categories:

- **Hierarchy:** wealth, social power, authority, influential, humble
- **Conservatism:** national security, reciprocation of favors, social order, honoring elders, moderate, preserving public image, self-discipline, politeness, family, security, devout, obedient, respect tradition, wisdom, forgiving
- **Harmony:** world of beauty, protecting environment, unity with nature
- **Egalitarian commitment:** helpful, social justice, equality, accepting my portion, loyal, honest, world at peace, responsible, freedom
- **Intellectual autonomy:** creativity, broad-minded, curious
- **Affective autonomy:** pleasure, varied life, exciting life, enjoying life, pleasure
- **Mastery:** successful, ambitious, independent, capable, daring, choosing own goals
Schwartz (1994) provided national indices for the seven categories of values as if they were dimensions.

The results of the Schwartz Value Survey suggested that some of the seven value categories are in opposition of each other, forming opposite poles on a bipolar dimension. Schwartz noted that the two autonomy categories were found opposite conservatism, whereas egalitarian commitment was opposed to hierarchy, and harmony opposite mastery. The result is essentially a three-dimensional solution, even though the indices and country rankings are not presented in this way. The three dimensions are:

1. Autonomy versus Conservatism
2. Hierarchy versus Egalitarian Commitment
3. Mastery versus Harmony

From the teachers sample, five out of Schwartz’ seven categories correlate with Hofstede’s individualism index. These are conservatism (negative), intellectual autonomy, egalitarian commitment, hierarchy (negative), and affective autonomy. Conservatism and affective autonomy (negative) correlate with Hofstede’s power distance index. Harmony correlates with Hofstede’s uncertainty avoidance, and mastery correlates with Hofstede’s masculinity.

From the students samples, harmony and mastery do not significantly correlate with any of Hofstede’s dimensions, whereas uncertainty avoidance and masculinity versus femininity do not correlate with any of Schwartz’ categories. However, Hofstede’s individualism correlates strongly with affective autonomy and power distance yields almost the same correlation with affective autonomy (negative).

3.2.3 Discussion

The work of Schwartz is interesting by itself, but especially in comparison with Hofstede’s dimensions. It confirms the existence of measurable cultural differences between economically developed and developing countries, as well as a correlation between collectivism/conservatism and power distance/hierarchy. Whether those phenomena should cover one, two, or three dimensions is unclear, but any number that is backed up by empirical evidence is acceptable.

Furthermore, some of Schwartz’s indices evidently produce significant correlations with each other. The correlation between affective autonomy, intellectual autonomy, and negative conservatism is so strong that they can in essence be seen as one bipolar dimension. Following the same logic, the mastery and harmony indices can statistically be seen as the opposite poles of one dimension as well. The main question is whether they are also conceptual opposites. Schwartz believes they are not, whereas Hofstede combined them into one (bipolar) dimension.

Unfortunately Schwartz did not provide correlations between his national indices and the values that define them. This makes it impossible to derive which of his 45 global values contribute most to the dimensions, or which ones may be redundant. However, it does appear that some of the values collected in the World Value Survey (see Section 3.4) have no correlates in Schwartz’s survey. This suggests that his value model is not exhaustive (Minkov 2013, p.231). Furthermore, if Schwartz’s seven categories would capture all human values, they should have strong predictive properties with respect to important external variables. This does not appear to be the case, as many external
variables that would appear to have a cultural background are not predicted by Schwartz’s indices at all.

In conclusion, Schwartz proposes a sensible analysis of value systems that results in meaningful national indices. The key contribution of his work is convincing support for an individualism/autonomy dimension and a related power index. He also shed more light on Hofstede’s masculinity vs. femininity dimension by establishing a relationship with the national indices called harmony and mastery.

Another contribution of Schwartz’s work is that he demonstrated that religious denomination is not an important determinant of cultural differences in values. Muslim and Christian Arabs in Israel were measured separately, but obtained nearly identical indices. This invalidates a common critique on the analysis of national differences of culture, as it clearly indicates that different religious groups living in the same country share (at least to some extent) similar values.

The relevance of the work of Schwartz to the practitioners in this study is mostly with regard to his dimension of mastery versus harmony. Regardless of whether mastery and harmony are two dimensions or one; their conceptualization is likely easier to understand for the practitioners than Hofstede’s masculinity. Schwartz’s other dimensions are unlikely to be used during the interviews, as the terms conservatism, intellectual autonomy, and egalitarian commitment are expected to be too complicated for the relatively inexperienced group of interviewees.
3.3 Trompenaars

An interesting contrast with the academically rigorous approach seen in the work of Geert Hofstede and Shalom Schwartz is the qualitative dimensional model proposed by management consultants Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner (2011). Their seven-dimension model attempts to explain cultural differences in multinational organizations and to provide insight for managers to avoid misunderstandings due to cultural differences.

This approach may appear similar to the studies discussed previously, but an essential difference is that the previous work is grounded in quantitative statistical analysis, whereas Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner chose a qualitative approach to cultural dimensions theory.

3.3.1 Research Approach

In their book “Riding the Waves of Culture”, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2011) suggest seven dimensions based on an extensive database with over 30,000 survey results collected from multiple studies involves questionnaires sent to managers. A total of 28 countries were included in these studies. Five dimensions are about ways in which members of a society relate to each other; one dimension addresses how they relate to the environment; and one dimension is about various aspects of time orientation. The following is an overview of the Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner dimensions:

1. **Universalism vs. Particularism**

   The universalism vs. particularism dimension reflects the relative importance of rules and laws in a society, as opposed to personal relationships. Universalistic societies focus on rules, codes, values, and standards, and believe this takes precedence over the needs and claims of friends and other personal relationships. They believe that rules or laws can be applied to everyone and should be used to determine what is right. Examples of universalistic countries are Germany and the United States.

   Pluralistic or particularistic societies focus on human friendships and personal relationships. They look at the situation to determine what is right or ethically acceptable. Examples of particularistic countries are China and Russia.

2. **Individualism vs. Collectivism**

   The individualism vs. collectivism dimension is about the relative importance of individual versus group interests, similar to Hofstede’s individualism index. The main question is whether we function as a group or as individuals.

   In individualist societies members place the individual before the group. Individual happiness, fulfillment and welfare are the most important things. An example country is the United States. In collectivist societies members place the group before the individual and are expected to act in ways that serve the best interests of the society. By doing so their individual needs will also be served. An example of a collectivistic country is Japan.
3. **Achievement vs. Ascription**

Achievement vs. ascription is similar to Hofstede’s power distance. It is based on how societies distribute status and authority. Achieved status is earned through ability, effort and competition. Ascribed status is received by birth, for example an aristocratic title.

In achievement-oriented societies status is based on what members have accomplished. This often results in the minimum use of titles, respect for superiors based on previous achievements, and companies where most senior managers are of varying ages and genders and have obtained their positions through accomplishments rather than just seniority. An example of an achievement-oriented country is the United States. Ascription-oriented societies ascribe status based upon social, position, age, gender, wealth, etc. It is characterized by the extensive use of titles, respect for superiors, and companies where most senior managers are male, middle-aged, and promoted primarily based on seniority. Examples of ascription-based countries are China and Russia.

4. **Neutral vs. Affective**

The neutral vs. affective dimension reflects how societies view the display of emotions by their members.

Neutral societies are characterized by not overtly revealing what one is thinking or feeling. This implies the hiding of emotions, cool and self-possessed conduct, lack of physical contact, gesturing or strong facial expressions, and monotone oral delivery of written materials. Japan is an example of a neutral country. On the other pole, affective societies are characterized by nonverbal and verbal display of thought and feelings, transparency and expressiveness, easy flow of emotions, admiration and display of heated, animated expressions, and fluent and dramatic delivery of statements. An example of a more affective country is Mexico.

5. **Specific vs. Diffuse**

The specific vs. diffuse dimension is about how members of a society engage colleagues in specific or multiple areas of their lives, or the extent to which societal members keep their personal and working lives separate.

In specific societies members tend to clearly separate their personal and working lives and have a completely different relation of authority in each social group. They tend to first analyze all elements of their lives individually before putting them together. The United States are an example of a specific country.

Members of diffuse-oriented societies see the individual elements of their lives and work as interrelated and thus there is no clear distinction between personal lives and work. The hierarchy of authority at work can reflect into social areas outside of work hours. An example of a diffuse country is China.
6. Internal vs. External

The sixth dimension addresses how members of a society relate to the environment. Internal vs. external is based on the degree to which members believe they can exert control over their environment, as opposed to believing that the environment controls them.

In an internal society members have a mechanistic view of nature and while they believe that nature is complex it can be controlled by people who make the effort and have the appropriate expertise. Members of internal societies therefore have more dominating attitudes and are uncomfortable with change.

In an external society members have an organic view of nature and rather than trying to control nature the preferred approach is to learn how to live in harmony with nature and adapt themselves to external circumstances. This implies a more flexible attitude and members that are more comfortable with change and more willing to compromise in order to achieve harmony.

7. Sequential vs. Synchronous

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner’s final dimension is sequential vs. synchronous, or time orientation. It distinguishes how societies respond to time and whether members prefer to do one thing at a time or work on several things at once.

Members of sequential societies prefer to do one activity at a time and follow plans and schedules strictly. In synchronous societies members see time as flexible and intangible and are comfortable doing several activities in parallel, loosely following schedules and agendas.

In addition to the sequential/synchronous classification, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner argue that another way cultures respond to time is with respect to their relative importance of the past, present and future.

Past-oriented societies view the future as a repetition of past events and experiences. This is characterized by talk about history and the origin of their family, business and nation. Everything is viewed in the context of tradition or history. Present-oriented societies do not assign much weight to either the past or future and are characterized by a sharp focus on current activities and enjoyments; the here and now. Future-oriented societies are focused on future prospects and do not see the past as being terribly significant in determining what is to come. This is characterized by much talk of prospects, potentials, aspirations, and future achievements, as well as enthusiasm for planning and strategizing.

3.3.2 Analysis

No empirical data is available on Trompenaars’ dimensions. The hypothesized dimensions will be used for the discussion of this model.
3.3.3 Discussion

In a reaction to Trompenaars’ work, Geert Hofstede (1996) argues that only two of the seven proposed dimensions can be confirmed statistically, both correlating with his own individualism dimension. He claims that Trompenaars used survey questions from his earlier thesis dissertation. In the thesis Trompenaars split the questions up in seven subscales corresponding to the seven dimensions, and divided those into two types, called Left Brain and Right Brain. Country scores on all subscales were correlated such that Left Brain cultures corresponded to universalist, individualist, neutral, specific, achievement-oriented, future-oriented, and dominating nature, while Right Brain cultures were the opposite.

This Left Brain versus Right Brain terminology reduces the set of seven dimensions to only one (!) dimension, which is not even truly dimensional in the sense that it forms a gradual scale between two extreme poles. Trompenaars also did not provide country scores or validation against independent external measures. Essentially they are typologies, not dimensions.

In “Riding the Waves of Culture” Trompenaars makes no mention of the Left and Right Brain categories, even though the earlier grouping suggests substantial correlation between the dimensions, at least as measured from the original sample set. Although the different dimensions may be conceptually distinct, the empirical data point to them being a part or an expression of the same phenomenon.

Hofstede tested the correlation patterns of the survey items that belong to different dimensions, and found that some questions belonging to one dimension correlate more strongly to other dimensions than to the other questions forming the same dimension. This implies that Trompenaars’ own data does not (fully) support his model of seven cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 1996). New factor analysis on Trompenaars’ data resulted in four factors, two of them strongly correlating with individualism and low power distance. The other two factors were weaker and did not correlate significantly with any of Hofstede’s dimensions. Hofstede therefore concludes that Trompenaars mainly measured the individualism dimension and that he confused conceptual categories with dimensions.

In a similar attempt to re-analyze Trompenaars’ database, cross-cultural psychologist Peter Smith set out to find dimensions to replicate the conclusions of Hofstede and Schwartz. Smith et al. (1996) believed that conceptually Trompenaars’ universalism does not necessarily correlate with individualism, but that there is a strong link between their opposites, particularism and collectivism. Whether Trompenaars intended this in his original framework or not, from reading his own definitions it seems plausible that respondents who value existing relationships (a particularistic phenomenon) would also value in-group cohesion (a phenomenon of collectivism) (Minkov, 2013).

From the definition of the achievement versus ascription dimension, Smith et al. derive that achievement should correlate with individualism, as striving for achieved status would be common in individualistic societies. This corresponds to the conclusion of Hofstede (1996) that most of Trompenaars’ dimensions measure his individualism.
Smith’s re-analysis of the survey data resulted in two strong factors, with a third weaker factor (Smith et al., 1996). The first dimension provided a contrast between rich and poor countries, which corresponds to Hofstede’s finding that a dimension similar to his individualism can be extracted from Trompenaars’ database. The second factor Smith found indicated a preference to do things alone rather than work as a team, and created a geographical contrast between the former Soviet bloc and Asia, some African countries, Southeast Europe, and the Middle East. He called this *utilitarian involvement versus loyal involvement*.

Smith et al. confirmed the findings from Hofstede and Schwartz about the existence of a cultural dimension that can explain the differences between rich and poor countries. Additionally, they expanded the list of characteristics of rich countries with a preference for ‘achieved status’, universalism in the sense of treating people in accordance with established universal rules (rather than personal relationships), and a separation of professional and private life. The cultures of developing countries exhibit the opposite tendencies. This is a useful addition to the understanding of the “rich-versus-poor-dimension”, and some credit goes to Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner for providing the database used to support this finding.

The second dimension suggested by Smith et al., utilitarian versus loyal involvement, looks like a new dimension. Conceptually it shows some association with GLOBE’s institutional collectivism, described in Section 3.6 of this report. This would need to be researched further and correlated to relevant national statistics. Smith et al. have confirmed Hofstede’s claim that Trompenaars’ seven-dimension model has no empirical support, but it does appear that Trompenaars’ database can be useful for the study of national differences between cultures.

A final consideration is devoted to the original seven-dimensions model. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner constructed an attractive introductory work on different cultures that can be useful to anybody who frequently does business in other countries, or who is simply interested in different cultures but not necessarily in reading highly academic literature.

The model received some criticism for not being backed up by quantitative data, but this may not have been Trompenaars’ goal. Maybe it is Hofstede who confused Trompenaars’ conceptual categories with dimensions, in which case his primary concern can be reduced to unfortunate use of the label ‘dimensions’? Hofstede’s disapproval of the seven-dimensions model is noted, but does not invalidate Trompenaars’ qualitative approach or make it less useful for the pragmatic traveler.

Another contribution from Trompenaars’ work is that it confirms that organizational behaviors can reveal national differences between cultures. This was also pointed out by Hofstede, who believed that people take their national cultures to the organizations they work for (Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov, 2010).

**Relevance**

The disagreement between Trompenaars and Hofstede is interesting, but not particularly relevant to the practitioners in this study. Due to this popularity of Trompeaars’ work in the business world, however, it is likely that some people are familiar with his terminology. As discussed above all of those dimensions show some amount of overlap with Hofstede’s dimensions, but the new names and additional observations might help both experienced and inexperienced practitioners in understanding these constructs better.
3.4 INGLEHART AND BAKER

Ronald Inglehart is an American political scientist and the director of the World Value Survey. He published a paper with his colleague Wayne Baker in which they analyzed the results of the World Value Survey and extracted two dimensions from it (Inglehart & Baker, 2000). Their work is not intended for cross-cultural psychologists and is not inspired or associated with Hofstede’s dimensional model.

3.4.1 RESEARCH APPROACH

Inglehart and Baker focused on the relationship between economic development and cultural change. They believed in Karl Marx’ theory that these are in a cause-and-effect relationship, and decided to test this hypothesis by analyzing the WVS data. At that time the WVS was carried out in 65 countries. They used 1995-1998 data.

3.4.2 ANALYSIS

Inglehart and Baker were looking for two dimensions they hypothesized in their earlier research. As such, this work is another example of theory-before-empiricism, similar to Shalom Schwartz.

1. Traditional versus secular-rational

The first dimension was to be characterized with the following four WVS items:

- Importance of God in the respondent’s life
- Rejection of abortion
- National pride
- Agreement that there is a need for greater respect for authority in the respondent’s society

Additionally, they believed that the following composite index would also positively correlated with the factor:

- Importance of obedience and religious faith as values for children versus the importance of independence and determination/perseverance as values for children.

The resulting factor was called traditional versus secular-rational. All factors loadings were high.

Inglehart and Baker noticed that, despite the fact that traditions across societies are different, traits of pre-industrial societies showed many similarities that were captured by the traditional values pole of this dimension. Values characterized with this pole are a low level of tolerance for abortion, suicide, euthanasia, divorce, and homosexuality, as well as a tendency to emphasize male dominance in political life, deference to parental authority, and the importance of family life. Societies that are associated with this pole are relatively authoritarian and have high levels of national pride. This should not come as a surprise, as many of these items are literally the four items taken from the WVS.

Countries that scored high on secular-rational values are Japan, Germany, and a Scandinavian cluster; while the traditional pole was populated by a Sub-Saharan African cluster and a number of
South-American countries. The United States are an exception as the only relatively rich country on the traditional end of the scale.

2. Survival versus self-expression

The second factor was also defined by five items from the WVS:

- Low subjective well-being
- Political inertia (respondent has not signed and would not sign a petition)
- Rejection of homosexuality
- Mistrust of people

Plus a composite four-item index:

- Respondents’ prioritization of economic and physical security over self-expression and quality of life

They called this factor survival values versus self-expression values.

As expected from the selected items, the survival versus self-expression dimension reflects differences in trust, tolerance, subjective-well-being, political activism, and various measures of self-expression. On the self-expression pole are mostly post-industrial societies with high levels of social security. At the survival pole are developing countries, particularly those of the former Soviet bloc, where people are reportedly less happy and satisfied with their lives. This is associated with a longing for economic and physical security and low level of tolerance for people who are different from them, such as foreigners and various minorities.

The composite index reflects Inglehart and Baker’s background in politics. They observed that differences in various political outlooks could be predicted based on this dimension. Members of societies that are associated with the self-expression pole wish for greater participation in economic and political life, whereas people on the survival pole show less interest in this.

The country indices on the survival versus self-expression scale show an Anglo and Scandinavian cluster near the self-expression pole (this time including the United States) and a mix of Eastern European, African, and Middle Eastern countries near the survival pole.

3.4.3 Discussion

Plotting the two dimensions on a map results in a group of rich countries in one corner and a group of the poorer countries in the world in the opposite corner. It can be concluded that as countries get richer their cultures tend to become more secular and more self-expressive. The directionality of this correlation seems straightforward. People in poor countries are simply too pre-occupied with survival to be concerned with self-expression (Minkov, 2013).

Inglehart and Baker also observed that societies with a high percentage of agricultural workers were near the bottom of the map, whereas societies with more industrial workers were near the top. It seems plausible that societies that depend strongly on agriculture have more traditional values, compared to more secular-rational values in modern, industrialized societies. It is interesting though that Inglehart and Baker have provided a map that predicts the type of subsistence in a society
based on survey items that are seemingly unrelated to this. Based on the analysis it is plausible to expect an increase in secularism and self-expression in countries that are in the process of achieving economic prosperity.

Both of Inglehart and Baker’s dimensions correlate significantly with Hofstede’s individualism. This brings up the interesting question whether Inglehart’s two dimensions can be merged into one, or if Hofstede’s individualism can be split into the two separate dimensions: traditional versus secular-rational and survival versus self-expression. Of the two, especially self-expression is a close replication of individualism.

An advantage of the dimensional model proposed by Inglehart and Baker is its simplicity. A large amount of the variance in the WVS database is explained by two dimensions that are intuitive and relatively straightforward to understand, also for the layperson. This makes the model a good way of introducing the subject of cultural differences and dimensions to beginners, while retaining a solid academic foundation based on large-scale quantitative analysis. It also helps that the study is based on the WVS, which uses nationally representative samples, as opposed to the previously discussed studies (Hofstede, Schwartz, Trompenaars) that rely on matched samples or convenience samples.

The study is also of interest to the more academic audience. Inglehart and Baker have shown that within-country differences in values and beliefs between people of different religious denominations who have lived together for centuries is relatively small (Inglehart & Baker, 2000). The basic values of Nigerian Muslims were found to be closer to those of Nigerian Christian than to the values of Indian Muslims. This confirms the assumption discussed in Chapter 2 that considering nations as single entities is valid.

A lingering issue with Inglehart’s work is related to the aforementioned simplicity. Even though it is unknown at this time how many dimensions can and should be extracted from the WVS database, it seems unlikely that a two-dimensional solution covers the entire scope of cultural differences between nations. The dimensions proposed by Inglehart and Baker are easy to understand and are backed by academically rigorous statistical data, but they may somewhat oversimplify differences between traditional and modern societies and they lack in detail about the nature of these differences.

To the practitioners in this study the simplicity of Inglehart and Baker’s model is both an advantage and a disadvantage. A two-dimensional model with somewhat familiar-sounding terminology is obviously easier to understand than the multi-dimensional models and academically phrased labels proposed by others. Especially traditional vs. secular-rational values is expected to be dimension that can add value to the cross-cultural interactions of practitioners.

However, there is no benefit in oversimplifying the study of national cultures. Practitioners need to understand that there are more than two ways of measuring differences between people, and two dimensions – even if they are good dimensions – cannot cover the entire spectrum of differences between national cultures. This will have to be explained to the practitioners.
3.5 MINKOV

Like Hofstede and Schwartz before him, Bulgarian researcher Michael Minkov believed that some of the economic variables that predict economic growth to development economists have equivalents in cultural values. To show this he used nationally representative samples taken from the World Value Survey.

3.4.1 RESEARCH APPROACH

Minkov assumed that the WVS data could be used to extract more dimensions than previously done by Inglehart and Baker (2000). He was particularly interested in values and beliefs concerning work-life balance and education, expecting to find a dimension similar to a dimension he found earlier and had labeled indulgence versus restraint [Minkov, 2007]. This dimension was later adopted by Hofstede in his model, as described in Section 3.1.

The original indulgence versus restraint dimension considered two aspects: a cognitive evaluation of one’s life and a description of one’s feelings. The WVS addresses both by asking people how satisfied they are with their lives and how happy they feel. National differences in life satisfaction can be explained convincingly by differences in national wealth, but this has relatively little to do with the happiness measured in the survey.

In this follow-up research Minkov uses the WVS items relating to hard work, thrift and leisure, instead of the direct questions about (perceived) happiness. The new indulgence versus restraint would have the restraint pole associated with lower happiness and life control, whereas indulgence would stand for the opposite. In accordance with the theories and findings of the development economists, this dimension would predict speed of economic growth, because societies that value thrift and hard work while sacrificing leisure would have an economic advantage over those that do not have such tendencies.

Minkov selected the following items that he believed would be of interest:

- Percentage of respondents who mention “hard work” as an important trait for children
- Percentage of respondents who mention “thrift” as an important trait for children
- Percentage of respondents who state that leisure is very important to them
- Percentage of respondents who mention “religious faith” as an important trait for children
- Percentage of respondents who are very proud to be citizens of their countries
- Percentage of respondents who are agree strongly that one of the main goals in their lives is to make their parents proud
3.4.2 Analysis

Minkov surveyed 33 countries that were represented at least twice since 1994 on all items of interest. Another 10 countries were added that were represented on nearly all items, in order to increase the sample size. The scores from the 2005-2008 and the 1994-2004 periods were averaged, resulting in the following dimensions:

1. Monumentalism versus flexumility

Factor analysis of the six WVS items yielded two principal components. The first was called monumentalism versus flexumility, in keeping with the terminology of Minkov’s previous work [2007]. It correlated strongly with parental pride, faith, and national pride. Monumentalisms ranks Arab countries on the top, followed by South American countries and the US, then Eastern European and India, the rest of Europe, and lowest scores for East Asia and Japan.

Minkov showed that the measure of monumentalism based on the WVS data from 1994 to 2004 is a strong predictor of national differences in school achievement. More monumentalist countries have lower school achievement in mathematics, science, and reading. The predictive power of monumentalism remained high after controlling for national differences in wealth. It is also insignificantly correlated with gross national income (GNI) per person (Minkov, 2013).

After his analysis, Minkov provided the following definition for his monumentalism versus flexumility dimension of national culture: “Monumentalism is a cultural syndrome that stands for pride and an invariant self: a conviction that one must have an unchangeable identity and hold on to some strong values, beliefs, and norms. It also reflects avoidance of personal duality and inconsistency. Flexumility is the opposite of the same syndrome. It reflects humility and a changeable self: an ability to assume multiple identities and adapt one’s values, beliefs, and norms in accordance with practical considerations.” (Minkov, 2013).

2. Industry versus indulgence

As expected, the second factor was similar to Minkov’s (2007) indulgence versus restraint dimension. Minkov (2011) relabeled this industry versus indulgence. It correlated with leisure (negative), hard work and thrift, on the industry pole, and their opposites on the indulgence pole. Industry ranks East Asian countries highest, then Eastern European, Arab, and Anglo-European the lowest. Minkov found that the industry index correlated with national wealth growth.

Minkov defined the industry versus indulgence dimension of national culture as follows: “Industry is a cultural syndrome that stands for a specific personal and societal discipline necessary nowadays for the achievement of economic prosperity in poor countries. It consists mainly of a high prioritization of hard work and thrift, low tolerance of deviations from established cultural norms, and a low prioritization of leisure for one’s self and individual freedoms for others. Indulgence stands for the opposite of industry: a relaxed attitude toward hard work, thrift and deviations from cultural norms as well as a prioritization of leisure and individual freedoms for everybody.”
3.4.3 Discussion

Minkov’s analysis is similar to Inglehart and Baker, in the sense that he was looking for specific items that he was interested in from the World Value Survey, and used those to extract dimensions. The two dimensions he extracted are also conceptually somewhat similar to Inglehart and Baker’s traditional versus secular-rational and survival versus self-expression. What is interesting is that they show different geographic patterns in their country scores.

The industry pole of the industry versus indulgence dimension corresponds to the survival pole in Inglehart’s survival versus self-expression values. However, the highest scoring countries are all Asian, as opposed to Eastern European Inglehart’s rankings. Despite the close association between monumentalism and traditional values, these dimensions produce different country rankings too (Minkov, 2013).

Michael Minkov has been involved in a number of different studies, each showing different dimensions extracted from variables of interest from the WVS or from other sources.

In one study Minkov observed that there is a relative stability in a country’s homicide rate, which is positively correlated with national rape rates, adolescent fertility, and HIV prevalence. He hypothesized that there is a common factor behind these phenomena with a strong cultural component, opposing the conventional explanation that they are a function of socioeconomic inequality. According to Minkov the four items are all associated with an indifference to risk, which would originate from preindustrial societies with strong mating competition, resulting in a short-term vision in matters associated with reproduction.

Using data from the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (specifically, the national murder index, national adolescent fertility rates, national HIV rates, average national IQs, national transparency versus corruption perception index, national road death tolls, and percentage of WVS adult respondents who live with their parents). This results in a factor very similar to a dimension from his earlier work, exclusionism versus universalism, and a new factor he called hypometropia versus prudence.

The first is statistically very similar to Hofstede’s collectivism (the opposite pole of individualism), while the latter is defined as a short-term vision and acceptance of risk and violence in reproductive matters versus a more prudent approach. Conceptually this appears similar to Hofstede’s uncertainty avoidance dimension, but the country scores show no significant correlation. The highest correlation of the hypometropia dimensions with an external variable that Minkov found was with life expectancy at birth. Due to its lack of correlates this dimensions will be further considered here.

The most relevant of Minkov’s dimensions to the practitioners in this study is indulgence, as this is expected to be a relatively easy to dimensions to recognize. The version in Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov (2010), Indulgence vs. Restraints, is preferred over Minkov’s later variation, Indulgence vs. Industry, as the former dimensions has poles are more obvious opposites of each other. The monumentalism dimension is interesting, but the terminology of Inglehart’s dimension is preferred.
3.6  PROJECT GLOBE

Project GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness) is a collective of 170 investigators. They presented data from 61 societies, written by different authors and edited by House et al. (2004). Project GLOBE was inspired by Hofstede’s work, but they claimed that some of Hofstede’s dimensions could be improved conceptually. The GLOBE dimensions are intended to correct this by focusing on the underlying theory before collecting data.

3.6.1  RESEARCH APPROACH

Based on existing theories, Project GLOBE started out with nine preconceived constructs that they expected to find. They were defined as follows:

- **Uncertainty avoidance**: the extent to which members of an organization or society strive to avoid uncertainty by relying on established social norms, rituals and bureaucratic practices.
- **Power distance**: the degree to which members of an organization or society expect and agree that power should be stratified and concentrated at higher levels of an organization or government.
- **Institutional collectivism**: the degree to which organization and societal institutional practices encourage and reward collective distribution of resources and collective action.
- **In-group collectivism**: the degree to which individuals express pride, loyalty, and cohesiveness in their organizations or families.
- **Assertiveness**: the degree to which individuals in organizations or societies are assertive, confrontational, and aggressive in social relationships.
- **Future orientation**: the degree to which individuals in organizations or societies engage in future-oriented behaviors such as planning, investing in the future, and delaying individual or collective gratification.
- **Performance orientation**: the degree to which an organization or society encourages and rewards group members for performance improvement and excellence.
- **Humane orientation**: the degree to which individuals in organizations or societies encourage and reward individuals for being fair, altruistic, friendly, generous, caring, and kind to others.
- **Gender egalitarianism**: the extent to which an organization or a society minimizes gender role differences and gender discrimination.

A unique aspect of the work done by Project GLOBE is that the respondents were asked to describe their societies, as opposed to themselves. In this sense they are not pure self-reports. Each dimension was conceptualized as having two versions. One would supposedly reveal societies and their cultures as they are (“as is”), focusing on the practices in a society. The other would reflect the respondents’ concepts of how an ideal society “should be”, intended to measure values. All items were scored on seven-point Likert scales.

3.6.2  ANALYSIS

All nine hypothesized dimensions were retained and the survey results were presented separately for the “should be” and “as is” constructs.
3.6.3 Discussion

The biggest discussion item on the work from Project GLOBE is the distinction between “as is” and “should be” dimensions. Despite the large number of investigators represented in the study, there are many researchers who disagree with this approach. The primary reason for this is the poor correlation of some dimensions with other models and with national statistics. Additionally, it turns out that in some cases the two versions of the dimensions negatively correlate with each other across nations.

Smith (2006) claims that the “should be” scales measure norms and ideologies, not personal values. Personal values are measured by asking respondents what is important to them. Questions about what should be important to people are often interpreted as referring to norms that others should respect. The answer may not provide any indication of whether the respondents approve of these norms as guiding principles in their own lives. This resulted in stereotypical descriptions of cultures and prevalent personality types (Minkov, 2013). Particularly humane orientation and assertiveness “as is” reflect unfounded national stereotypes and do not have convincing predictive properties (McCrae et al, 2008).

- In-group collectivism and power distance “as is” show the expected correlations with other similar constructs of individualism and power distance / hierarchy.
- GLOBE’s uncertainty avoidance is a completely different construct than Hofstede’s uncertainty avoidance. It correlates strongly with in-group collectivism (and therefore Hofstede’s individualism). According to Minkov (2013) it measures ‘the degree of Western order in a society’.
- Future orientation is conceptually very similar to uncertainty avoidance. As expected they correlate strongly.
- Institutional collectivism does not seem to correlate with anything, even Hofstede’s collectivism or GLOBE’s own in-group collectivism. Maleki and De Jong (2014) see this as an entirely new dimension measuring a preference for collaboration when conducting social tasks. Minkov and Blagoev (2012) claim that it mostly measures itself, which reaffirms Maleki and De Jong’s argument for making it a new dimension.
- Gender egalitarianism “as is” has two problems. Firstly, the survey items are very stereotypical and secondly the country scores have low face validity. Somehow Qatar outranks the Netherlands and Finland, and Iran scores higher than Switzerland. This may be a real dimension, but Project GLOBE’s conceptualization is not supported by external evidence.
- Humane orientation “as is” appears to correlate positively with racism as measured from the WVS (Minkov and Blagoev, 2012) and, according to data from Amnesty International, countries that score high are more likely to have and apply capital punishment. This construct may also have been affected by country stereotypes.
- Assertiveness “as is” correlated only weakly with external variables. It is interesting that GLOBE considered assertiveness separate from mastery (which it did not cover at all) and gender egalitarianism, as opposed to Hofstede who combined the three into one dimension (masculinity vs. femininity).
- In many cases the correlation between the “as is” and “should be” dimensions is negative. This either means that people are unhappy with how their own society is, or that the
questions are phrased in a confusing way. Distinguishing between values and practices is relevant, but how exactly to do this will need to be researched further. The current “should be” dimensions do not appear to be very useful and do not show any clear geographical patterns.

The GLOBE debate certainly helped in recognizing that there is a difference between personal values and norms or ideologies for others, but it seems that it has not provided a definite answer on how to measure these traits separately. Additionally, some of GLOBE’s dimensions are highly interrelated.

GLOBE also showed that increasing the complexity of the dimensions, in this case by separating them into “as is” and “should be”, does not necessarily lead to better results. A good model allows for useful predictions that correlate with a relevant conceptualization. Some of GLOBE’s dimensions do this; others are more controversial.

Relevant for the practitioners are in particular the GLOBE dimensions that were not found in other studies, i.e. Assertiveness, Institutional Collectivism and Gender Egalitarianism. The conceptualizations associated with the other dimensions were all covered earlier, and GLOBE’s work does not necessarily improve the definitions of those constructs.
3.7 CLUSTERING

All dimensions that have discussed so far are presented below in Table 3.1. For the purpose of presenting the dimensions to practitioners, however, there is little point in introducing 30 dimensions, composed by different researchers, of which some are overlapping or conflicting. To introduce some order to this somewhat chaotic collection, a clustering of dimensions is proposed.

Dimensions that clearly measure similar cultural traits are grouped together in clusters. Unfortunately this blurs the statistical balance of the dimensions that are contained within a cluster, affecting the linearity of the country scores and rankings. It does however make the theory much more presentable and easier to understand. To practitioners it is relevant to have a sensible description of a phenomenon, or group of phenomena, that predict cultural differences between countries. Clustered dimensions fulfill this need for all practical purposes. The clustering presented here is based on the work done by Maleki and De Jong (2014).

![Table 3-0-1: Clustering of Dimensions](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hofstede</th>
<th>Schwartz</th>
<th>Trompenaars</th>
<th>Inglehart &amp; Baker</th>
<th>Minkov</th>
<th>GLOBE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Power Distance</td>
<td>Autonomy vs. Conservatism</td>
<td>Universalism / Particularism</td>
<td>Traditional vs. Secular-rational</td>
<td>Monumentalism vs. Flexumility</td>
<td>Uncertainty Avoidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualism</td>
<td>Hierarchy</td>
<td>Individualism / Collectivism</td>
<td>Survival vs. Self-expression</td>
<td>Industry vs. Indulgence</td>
<td>Power Distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculinity</td>
<td>Mastery vs. Harmony</td>
<td>Achievement / Ascription</td>
<td>Exclusionism vs. Universalism</td>
<td>Institutional Collectivism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainty Avoidance</td>
<td>Neutral / Affective</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>In-group Collectivism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Term Orientation</td>
<td>Specific / Diffuse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assertiveness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indulgence vs Restraint</td>
<td>Internal / External</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Future Orientation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sequential / Synchronic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Performance Orientation</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nine Clusters (Maleki and De Jong, 2014)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individualism vs. Collectivism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainty Avoidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hierarchy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tradition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mastery</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The naming of clusters is somewhat controversial. In some case the name of the ‘dominant’ dimension defining the cluster is used, but in other cases this is less obvious. Where possible familiar names from the literature have been used. Care should be taken to avoid mistaking the clusters introduced here for their namesake original dimensions. From this point onward, when reference is made to an original dimension it will be stated explicitly and will be accompanied by its author, for example Hofstede’s individualism or Schwartz’ affective autonomy.
3.7.1 **NINE CLUSTER MODEL**

The following nine clusters are proposed by Maleki and De Jong (2014):

1. **Individualism vs. Collectivism**

The first cluster characterizes the interrelatedness of individuals. It is one of the best-known constructs in cross-cultural analysis and is present in all models discussed in Chapter 3. Hofstede’s individualism vs. collectivism; Minkov’s universalism vs. exclusionism; Schwartz’s autonomy vs. conservatism; GLOBE’s in-group collectivism; Trompenaars’ individualism vs. collectivism; and many others not discussed in this report (Parsons, Kluckhohn, Douglas); are all conceptually and empirically in essence the same dimension.

Inglehart and Baker’s self-expression vs. survival is a broad dimension that contains many different cultural attributes, including close associates of individualism vs. collectivism. It can therefore be considered a part of the individualism cluster. As discussed in Section 3.3, several of Trompenaars’ conceptual categories correlate strongly with and contain facets of individualism vs. collectivism as well. Universalism/particularism, ascription/achievement, specific/diffuse, and sequential/synchronous are included in this cluster.

Individualism vs. collectivism is a very broad construct that can be conceptualized in many different ways. The common denominator is that all constructs captured by this cluster explain the differences between developed and poor countries by asking respondents questions about how individuals are interrelated (Minkov, 2013).

2. **Power Distance**

The second cluster encompasses the power distance dimension from Hofstede and GLOBE, as well as Schwartz’s hierarchy vs. egalitarian commitment. These dimensions reflect the extent to which hierarchical relations and position-related roles are accepted in a society.

They correlation between the dimensions of individualism and power distance has been discussed previously and also holds for the two clusters with the same name. Again a conceptual distinction is made, despite the significant correlation that is observed in both Hofstede’s individualism / power distance and Schwartz’s autonomy / hierarchy dimensions. Other studies combine the two dimensions into one broader dimension, for example Inglehart’s survival vs. self-expression.

3. **Uncertainty Avoidance**

The uncertainty avoidance dimension was introduced by Hofstede and indicates to what extent people are comfortable with ambiguity and unknown situations. This dimension has been criticized in Section 3.1.3 for combining unrelated measures into one dimension, but conceptually the construct of uncertainty avoidance makes sense.

The difficulty with this dimension is highlighted by GLOBE’s dimension of uncertainty avoidance, which seems to measure a conceptually different construct. Based on the question items selected for the Project GLOBE dimension, the measured country scores and its correlations with other dimensions and phenomena, Venaik and Brewer (2010) argue that this dimension represents the cultural trait of rule orientation. Minkov (2013) claims it measures “the degree of Western order in a
society”. Dimensions that measure rule vs. relationship orientation (also called universalism vs. particularism) are generally considered a facet of individualism vs. collectivism (Maleki and De Jong, 2014). As discussed in Section 3.6.3 this is indeed the closest correlate of GLOBE’s uncertainty avoidance dimension. It is therefore not included in the uncertainty avoidance cluster, despite the similar name.

However, GLOBE’s dimensions of future orientation and performance orientation (both “as is”) are conceptually similar to uncertainty avoidance. Uncertainty avoidance is about avoiding unknown situations, and as the future is unknown it can be expected that the future orientation dimension can be categorized in this cluster. The performance orientation dimension, defined as the degree to which a society encourages group members to performance improvement, is also about planning for the future and therefore about avoiding uncertainty in life.

4. Mastery vs. Harmony

The mastery vs. harmony cluster mostly follows its namesake dimension from Schwartz, consisting of cultural attributes related to competitiveness and achievement on one pole, versus consensus, equity and harmony on the opposite pole.

The masculinity dimension from Hofstede is conceptually associated with this cluster, but as explained in Section 3.1.3 its measure is confusing. Maleki and De Jong (2014) believe that Hofstede’s masculinity (based on its definition) is a so-called ‘big-dimension’, combining cultural features of mastery, assertiveness and gender egalitarianism. They argue that assertiveness and gender egalitarianism should be embodied into two separate clusters, as they measure separate cultural traits that do not always go together with high mastery as defined by Schwartz.

The relation of humans to nature is another facet of this cluster. Societies where people are in harmony with nature correlate with the harmony pole of this dimension, while trying to control or change the environment is associated with mastery. This cultural trait is covered by Trompenaars’ internal vs. external control dimension.

5. Traditionalism vs. Secularism

The fifth cluster collects cultural traits related to religiosity, self-stability and feelings of pride versus secular orientation and flexibility. Inglehart’s traditional vs. secular-rational and Minkov’s monumentalism vs. flexumility are conceptually and empirically relevant to this cluster. Schwartz’s conservatism shows some conceptual association with traditionalism as well, but its opposite, autonomy, is more closely related to individualism than to secularism.

Hofstede’s long-term orientation is also included in this cluster. This is another big-dimension, containing elements of several different cultural traits. It was discussed in Section 3.1.3 that the values that span this dimension are only loosely interrelated and that long-term orientation and short-term orientation do not appear to be opposites on a bi-polar dimension.

The only element of Hofstede’s conceptualization of long-term orientation is thrift, which has the lowest factor loading in this dimension (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010; Maleki and De Jong, 2014). Furthermore, even the factor of thrift is a weak indicator of future orientation, since this trait could also be related to survival factors. Hofstede’s LTO represents traditional stability, not future...
orientation, and therefore belong to this cluster. A more suitable construct that measures “long-term orientation” is GLOBE’s future orientation, which was included in the uncertainty avoidance cluster.

6. Indulgence vs. Restraint

The indulgence vs. restraint cluster contains the dimensions with the same name, extracted by Minkov from the World Value Survey and adopted by Hofstede in his model. It reflects the extent to which free gratification of basic and natural human desires is allowed or restraint. Minkov selected WVS items that were previously captured by Inglehart’s survival vs. self-expression dimension. As mentioned previously, this is a big-dimension that covers aspects of various cultural phenomena.

Trompenaars’ dimension of affective vs. neutral measures a similar trait. In neutral societies members do not overtly reveal what they are thinking or feeling, similar to Minkov’s restraint pole. Affective societies are characterized by expressiveness and more open display of emotions. Conceptually this is closely associated with indulgence.

7. Assertiveness vs. Tenderness

The seventh cluster is assertiveness vs. tenderness. It contains the cultural traits of being assertive and aggressive on one pole, versus being kind and tender in social relationship on the opposite. Dimensions associated with this cluster are GLOBE’s assertiveness and GLOBE’s humane orientation.

Hofstede considers assertiveness to be as aspect of his masculinity dimension. However, Maleki and De Jong (2014) argue that assertiveness and mastery do not necessary co-occur and consider assertiveness as a distinguishable feature of culture. Hofstede also considered the item “service to others”, which he merged into his long-term orientation dimension. Conceptually this cultural trait is associated with humane orientation and belongs to the tenderness pole of this cluster.

8. Gender Egalitarianism

The eighth cluster is associated with GLOBE’s gender egalitarianism dimension, which considers discriminatory genders roles across cultures. This is another dimension that Hofstede has embedded in his masculinity vs. femininity index.

It can be argued that this dimension is associated with the individualism cluster, as individualistic cultures are more open to universal rules and status by achievement, both of which would allow for more equality (including gender equality) in a society.

Maleki and De Jong (2014) indicate that this dimension could be changed drastically as a result of modernization, but at this time there are still modern societies with a strong role division between genders.

9. Collaborativeness

The ninth and final cluster measures the spirit of team-work. This cluster is based on GLOBE’s institutional collectivism dimension, representing group loyalty, group interest, and group acceptance beyond individual goals. Whereas this may sound similar to individualism, the main cultural feature of this dimension is inclination of people to collaborate with each other in social
tasks, as opposed to identification with a group in the individualism cluster. To illustrate the difference between the two clusters, consider for example The Netherlands or the Scandinavian countries. These are reportedly highly individualistic, but also very good at team working. The opposite is observed in countries like Greece, Iran, and Colombia (Maleki and De Jong, 2014).

Conceptually team work could be linked to higher interpersonal trust and consequently lower uncertainty avoidance (cluster 3); less aggressiveness and therefore more focus on harmony (cluster 4); or the opposite of high self-stability and low flexibility (cluster 5). Correlation with these clusters is therefore expected (Maleki and De Jong, 2014).

3.7.2 DISCUSSION

This chapter has seen the introduction of many dimensions, each with its own merits and flaws, but all measuring cultural differences on a gradual scale along which societies can be compared to each other. Despite that researchers worked from different starting assumptions and used different data sets, there seems to be a correlation between some dimensions from different models. This would indicate that they measured the same cultural traits.

The clusters from Maleki and De Jong are not perfect and it is certain that some researchers will disagree with the grouping of some of their dimensions. However, for all practical purposes Maleki and De Jong have greatly simplified the ever-growing amount of dimensions into a much more useable set of nine clusters that represent common dimensions from the literature.

This set of clusters can be considered as nine dimensions. From here on these ‘dimensions’ will be used to assess their usefulness to practitioners. If only certain aspects of a cluster that are associated with one of its original dimensions will be identifiable by practitioners, they can be split up again during the interviews to explain the individual dimensions that are contained in them. For now the nine clusters from Maleki and De Jong will be taken into the interviews with practitioners as if they are dimensions.
4. Methodology

The objective of this research project is to discuss cultural dimensions with practitioners and to assess the applicability of the dimensional model. This will be achieved through a series of interviews with people that work with different cultures on a daily basis. This chapter describes the methodology behind the interviews and the topics that will be discussed.

The following research questions were identified in Chapter 1:

- What research has been done on the phenomenon of cultural dimensions and what theoretical models currently exist?
- How do existing models of cultural dimensions interrelate and what criticism is there on these theories?
- What do practitioners think of the applicability of the available models and how do they currently apply them?
- What expectations would practitioners have from a handbook or a set of guidelines and what will be the main conditions for such a handbook?
- How can the dimensional model be useful for practitioners and how can relevant theoretical knowledge be transitioned into practical guidelines or other applications?
- What would a handbook for practitioners actually look like and what set of dimensions would it use?

The first two items were discussed in the theoretical framework established in Chapter 3. The dimensional models from Hofstede, Schwartz, Trompenaars, Inglehart and Baker, Minkov, and Project GLOBE were introduced, followed by a clustering of these dimensions proposed by Maleki and De Jong that highlights how they correlate.

The next two research questions – emphasized in the list above – are the subject of the interviews with the practitioners. This chapter serves as introduction to the interviews and discusses how they are structured. The following chapter contains the results of the interviews.

Section 4.1 describes the content of the interviews. Based on the theory from Chapter 3 this section selects a set of useful dimensions to introduce to the practitioners. Section 4.2 focuses on who will be interviewed. It presents the company where the interviews are conducted, as well as the consequences of the selection of this particular sample group. This section ends with a list of the nationalities, job descriptions, and genders of all practitioners that were interviewed. The final section describes the structure of the interviews and the items that will be discussed.
4.1 SELECTION OF DIMENSIONS

This section presents which dimensions will be discussed with the practitioners in the interviews. The selected dimensions are based on the clusters derived by Maleki and De Jong, presented in Section 3.7 and shown below in Table 4.1.

The clusters will be presented to practitioners as dimensions, using the definition of the main dimension that spans it (emphasized in bold font in the second column of Table 4.1). The other dimensions in each cluster are used to describe the phenomenon in more detail or to provide additional clarification as needed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clusters (Maleki and De Jong)</th>
<th>Dimensions (Original Authors)</th>
<th>Definitions (Original Authors) / Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individualism vs. Collectivism</td>
<td>Individualism (Hofstede)</td>
<td>Position of the individual and collective in a society. “Individualism pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose (everyone is expected to look after him- or herself and his or her immediate family); Collectivism pertains to societies in which people from birth onward are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people’s lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty.” (Hofstede, 2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Autonomy (Schwartz)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Survival vs. Self-expression (Inglehart)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exclusionism (Minkov)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In-group Collectivism (GLOBE)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power Distance</td>
<td>Power Distance (Hofstede)</td>
<td>Dependence relationships in a country (high dependence versus consultation/interdependence). “The extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally.” (Hofstede, 2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hierarchy (Schwartz)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Power Distance (GLOBE)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainty Avoidance</td>
<td>Uncertainty Avoidance (Hofstede)</td>
<td>Society’s tolerance of the ambiguous and the unpredictable. “The extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations.” (Hofstede, 2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Future Orientation (GLOBE)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Performance Orientation (GLOBE)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indulgence vs. Restraint</td>
<td>Indulgence (Hofstede / Minkov)</td>
<td>Indulgence stands for a tendency to allow relatively free gratification of basic and natural human desires related to enjoying life and having fun. Its opposite, restraint, reflects a conviction that such gratification needs to be curbed and regulated by strict social norms. (REF)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neutral vs. Affective (Trompenaars)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tradition</td>
<td>Traditional vs. Secular-rational (Inglehart)</td>
<td>Tradition is characterized by the following WVS items: Importance of God in the respondent’s life; Rejection of abortion; National pride; Agreement that there is a need for greater respect for authority; and the importance of obedience and religious faith versus the importance of independence and determination/perseverance. (REF)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Long-term Orientation (Hofstede)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monumentalism (Minkov)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertiveness vs. Tenderness</td>
<td>Assertiveness (GLOBE)</td>
<td>The degree to which individuals in organizations or societies are assertive, confrontational, and aggressive in social relationships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Humane Orientation (GLOBE)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborativeness</td>
<td>Institutional Collectivism (GLOBE)</td>
<td>The degree to which organization and societal institutional practices encourage and reward collective distribution of resources and collective action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mastery</td>
<td>Mastery (Schwartz)</td>
<td>Mastery is associated with the following values: successful, ambitious, independent, capable, daring, choosing own goals. Hofstede’s Masculinity is about the desirability of assertive behavior versus modest behavior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Masculinity (Hofstede)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Internal vs. External (Trompenaars)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Egalitarianism</td>
<td>Gender Egalitarianism (GLOBE)</td>
<td>The extent to which an organization or a society minimizes gender role differences and gender discrimination</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following overview discusses some considerations regarding the presentation of the clusters during the interviews, as well as expectations for the responses on each cluster.

- Individualism vs. Collectivism
- Hierarchy / Power Distance

Individualism and power distance are two of the most fundamental dimensions that have emerged from many different studies. If interviewees have any existing knowledge of cultural dimensions these would be the most likely ones they are familiar with. Additionally, cultural differences attributed to these dimensions should be fairly straightforward to identify, even for the interviewees that are not familiar with dimensional theory. Considering that the focus will be on the workplace, especially the effects of high versus low power distance are expected to be clearly visible to everybody.

A potential concern is that a significant percentage of interviewees are from strong individualistic societies. It is likely that individualistic group behavior is natural to them and the concept of collectivism may be foreign. If this is the case the dimension can be explained in more detail to elaborate on the definition of collectivism. This problem is not expected with the power distance dimension, as the terms high and low power distance are more intuitive.

- Uncertainty Avoidance

The concept of uncertainty avoidance is expected to require some explanation to the layperson. However, despite the questionable survey items used by Hofstede, this cultural trait should be recognizable to especially the more experienced interviewees. It is important to distinguish the rule orientation aspect of uncertainty avoidance from the effects of unequal power distribution, in order to avoid a strong correlation with the power distance / hierarchy dimension. In contrast to individualism and power distance, this dimension should lead to some interesting differences between countries that are not related to national wealth.

- Indulgence vs. Restraint

Indulgence vs. restraint is another intuitive dimension. This dimension has not received a lot of attention from the literature, but it does explain a highly visible aspect of national culture. While care must be taken to avoid stereotyping, this dimension with its country examples (e.g. Latin countries versus East-Asian countries) can be a good way to introduce the concept of dimensional scales to in particular the less experienced interviewees. If the terms indulgence and restraint are unclear or confusing it may be easier to explain this dimension using Trompenaars’ neutral vs. affective, which is covered by the same cluster.

- Mastery

As discussed in Chapter 3, the conceptualization of the mastery dimension is a controversial subject in the academic community. There is no consensus on how a dimension about masculinity or mastery – whichever label and conceptualization one prefers – should look and what it should encompass. This cluster from Maleki and De Jong closely resembles Schwartz’s mastery vs. harmony dimension. It is not expected to be an easy dimension for interviewees to grasp, even for the more experienced ones.
The observable aspects of this dimension to the practitioners could be competitiveness and a desire to control the environment on one pole, versus a preference for harmony or consensus on the opposite.

- Traditional vs. Secular-rational

The tradition dimension as used in this study will be mostly based on the traditional vs. secular-rational dimension from Inglehart and the monumentalism vs. flexumility dimension from Minkov. Even though Hofstede’s long-term orientation is also included in this cluster, the confusing label and inappropriate survey items make this aspect of tradition too complex to introduce to laypersons.

A particular area of interest regarding tradition is whether interviewees will pick up that the United States, where most of the interviews are conducted, are on the traditional end of the scale. This will be discussed in interviews with employees who have relevant cross-cultural work experience.

- Assertiveness
- Collaborativeness

Assertiveness and collaborativeness are both based on the work from Project GLOBE. These dimensions could be somewhat confusing due to their namesake character traits. It will be stressed during the interviews that dimensions measure the average assertiveness or collaboration in a society and that there will always be individuals that possess more or less of a certain trait.

Assertiveness may also need to be controlled for job description. It seems likely that project managers and people in (senior) leadership functions are above-average assertive and could affect the view people have of some countries in this relatively small-sample exercise. A distinction should be made between this dimension and mastery, or else a combination of the two would result in a measure similar to Hofstede’s masculinity. It would be interesting to discuss the similarities and differences between these constructs with the more experienced interviewees.

With collaborativeness it is important to keep the discussion separate from job performance. As most work at Atkins is done in project teams, collaboration is an important skill for employees at all levels. Whether individual employees are good at this or not should be seen separately from the cultural trait.

- Gender Egalitarianism

Gender egalitarianism also originates from Project GLOBE. This is a challenging dimension to introduce to interviewees, as gender equality is a controversial subject in many societies and not something people talk about easily, particularly in a work environment.

This problem affects not only the interviewees, but also the interviewer. All interviews are conducted at Atkins and asking people about their opinion on gender equality was not possible without risking involvement from Human Resources. It is noted that this by itself is an interesting cultural observation, but that does not change the situation. This dimension has therefore not been discussed during the interviews. See also the reflections in Section 6.3 for more on this.
4.2 SELECTION OF RESPONDENTS

In order to test the applicability of cultural dimensions in the workplace it is necessary to talk to people who experience cultural differences in their work. The practitioners in this study are employees of varying nationalities, working for Atkins Aerospace. While the research project has been conducted from the Atkins Seattle office, in the United States, the interviewees are located across different offices in different countries.

4.2.1 ATKINS

Atkins is a multinational engineering service provider and employs approximately 17,500 staff in 180 offices across 28 countries. Due to the international nature of the project work at Atkins employees are relatively experienced with working across different countries and with different cultures. There are multiple foreign nationals working in the different offices on temporary or permanent basis.

Atkins’ core business is engineering design, planning, project management, and consulting services. Clients operate in the public, regulated and private sectors, and include central and local governments. The main focus is on infrastructure, transportation, and utilities. The name Atkins is most widely associated with its construction work on the Burj al Arab (Dubai, UAE), completed in 1999. Other projects Atkins is or has been involved in are the New York World Trade Center Redevelopment and the ITER fusion reactor in France. Atkins was also the official engineering services provider for the London 2012 Olympic Games.

Atkins’ aerospace division employs 500 staff globally. It provides high-end technical and project management services to aircraft and engine manufacturers, as well as other customers in the aerospace sector. Projects include the Airbus A380 wing-box certification, design and analysis of the A320 wing tip extensions, and advanced research into the behavior of composite structures.

![Atkins Logo](image1)

**FIGURE 4-1: PROJECT THAT ATKINS HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN, FLTR: BURJ AL ARAB, LONDON 2012 OLYMPIC GAMES, AIRBUS A380**

The Atkins Aerospace offices are located in the United Kingdom (Bristol, Derby and Glasgow), Germany (Bremen and Hamburg), The Netherlands (Amsterdam), India (Bangalore), and the United States (Seattle). These are all key locations of Atkins’ clients in order to build up strong long-term partnerships and to be readily accessible for new project work. The Seattle office was opened in 2011 to provide access to aircraft manufacturer Boeing.
4.2.2 GROUPING

A total of 20 Atkins employees have been interviewed, spread evenly over different experience levels and different extents of prior knowledge about cultural dimensions. An employee is considered experienced when he or she has a minimum of five years of industry experience. They are considered to have prior knowledge of dimensions if they are aware of the existence of cultural dimensions prior to discussing this with them, regardless of whether they can name any.

Ideally each group would contain a balanced mix of nationalities and genders. However, due to the geographical and time constraints of this project, as well as the minority of women in engineering, it is not possible to achieve perfect within-group diversity. The goal was therefore to at least have a similar composition in each group, allowing for comparison of results between experienced and inexperienced interviewees, and between employees with and without prior knowledge of cultural dimensions.

The Inexperienced / Prior Knowledge group proved to be difficult to fill, as young engineers with prior knowledge of cultural dimensions were rare. Which of the inexperienced engineers were deemed to have sufficient knowledge about different cultures to be in this group was decided on a case-by-case basis. On the opposite end of the spectrum were plenty of practitioners available with high experience and no prior knowledge. This group is therefore slightly larger.

Table 4-2 shows the details of the group composition, as well as the nationalities and genders of all practitioners in this study.
### TABLE 4-2: GROUP, NATIONALITY, JOB DESCRIPTION, AND GENDER OF ALL INTERVIEWEES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Job Description</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>#</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Experience, No Prior Knowledge</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Sr Engineer</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>England</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Sr Engineer</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Australian</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>Project Manager</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>Sr Engineer</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Netherlands</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Experience, Prior Knowledge</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>Sr Engineer</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>England</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Netherlands</td>
<td>Project Manager</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Netherlands</td>
<td>Sr Engineer</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Sr Engineer</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Experience, No Prior Knowledge</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Netherlands</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Experience, Prior Knowledge</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>England</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.2.3 ASSUMPTIONS

As all interviews are conducted within the same company, there are a number of similarities between respondents that distinguish them as a group from a completely random sample.

First of all, Atkins is an engineering services provider, which implies that a high number of employees have engineering degrees. Non-engineering functions can be split in two groups; management and administrative staff. In all cases the employee’s level of education is expected to be somewhat to significantly higher than a nation’s average. Income levels are also higher than average.

Additionally, a large percentage of engineers is male. At Atkins approximately 80% of the engineering staff is male, with a similar percentage for management. However, there is a female majority in the administrative staff. Hofstede (2010) reported that only his masculinity dimension resulted in different average results for males and females. If that is the case only the mastery vs. harmony and assertiveness vs. tenderness dimensions used in this study will be affected.

Due to Atkins’ mixed focus on engineering and consultancy, the aerospace team is dynamic and relatively young. The company is also inherently Anglo-centric. Although most employees in the different Atkins offices are local, it is possible that the company background has affected the selection process by attracting employees that are interested in working in an international environment. It can therefore be expected that the majority of Atkins employees have a relatively high cultural awareness and that they enjoy working with people from different countries and cultures. This could set them apart for the national average on some dimensions.

The assumptions associated with this sample group, and how those affect the results, are discussed in more detail in the conclusion of the research project.
4.3 Structure of Interviews

The goal of the interviews is to find out what practitioners think about the theory on cultural dimensions, how they currently apply it, and how this process could be improved.

After opening the interview and introducing the subject matter, the first discussion item is the practitioner’s personal experience with different cultures. Is this experience positive or negative, and how do they currently deal with culture differences? Do they take any specific measures when or before talking to people from a different culture? The purpose of these questions is to establish the current state of the interviewee’s knowledge.

To the group that is unfamiliar with cultural dimensions the second item is the introduction of cultural dimension theory, through a set of suitable and easy-to-understand dimensions. Interviewees that are already familiar with cultural dimensions can talk about what they know, followed by the introduction of some additional dimensions or a discussion of how they apply them in their work. For both groups the follow-up will be an assessment of their opinion about dimensional theory.

In this follow-up the main goal will be to discuss whether or not they recognize any of the cultural dimensions, and which ones in particular. Does this new knowledge explain any past experiences? When they can connect the theory to some practical examples the next goal is to determine whether this can be useful in the future. Which dimensions in particular would be useful?

The final discussion item is the possibility of a guideline or manual to support cross-cultural communication and what they would expect from such a document. How would they use such a document?

The interviews are only loosely structured. This is done intentionally to allow for some flexibility and to account for the different levels of experience and prior knowledge of the interviewees. The aim is to have qualitative, in-depth discussions with practitioners; not scripted surveys. Items can be discussed in more details when necessary or when the interviewee has a special interest in or relevant experience with a certain cultural phenomenon.

A total of 20 interviews is conducted, each between 30 and 45 minutes. All interviews are one-on-one, either in person or through a video call. Figure 4-3 is a rough overview of the discussion items in the interviews and the time allotted for each item:

Recording the interview was considered to affect the discussions too much. This would not have been possible without permission of the interviewees, and asking them for permissions was deemed to influence responses. To collect the interview responses for further processing notes were taken. Notes were not shared with the respondents, but they were aware of them being made. Processing of the data is done by going over the notes later (as soon as possible after the interview) and collecting useful observations and quotes, as well as counting specific measurables or statistics used for Figures 5-2 through 5-5.
Interview Structure

• Welcome and Introduction
  o Explain thesis and goal of interview
  o Few minutes

• Ask about personal experience with different cultures
  o Is their experience positive or negative?
  o How do they deal with different cultures?
  o Do they take any specific measures when or before talking to people from a
different culture?
  o ±10 minutes

• Introduction of cultural dimensions
  o Check prior knowledge, ask if they heard of and know any dimensions of culture
  o Explain basic theory: typologies and dimensions. Focus on linearity of dimensions as
  opposed to stereotypes.
  o Ask if they understand / have questions
  o 5 minutes, overlaps into next item.

• Opinion about cultural dimensions
  o Do they recognize any dimensions? Do they know any examples from experience?
  o Does it explain miscommunications that happened in the past?
  o Do they see how this could be useful? / Would it be helpful in the future?
  o Which dimensions would be most useful?
  o 10-15 minutes

• Discuss opportunities
  o Would a booklet or manual be useful? Or a training / class?
  o How would they make use of this?
  o How many and which dimensions should be included?
  o ±10 minutes

• Wrap-up
  o Conclude, thank them for their time, follow-up email
  o Few minutes

FIGURE 4-3: STRUCTURE OF INTERVIEWS
5. Results

The goal of this study is to find out what practitioners think about theory on cultural dimensions, how they currently apply it, and how this process could be improved. This chapter presents the results of the interviews discussing those items. Four key items were identified in Chapter 4:

- Personal experience with different cultures
- Introduction of cultural dimensions
- Opinion about cultural dimensions
- Opportunities for improvement

Each of these items represents a section of this chapter in which the responses from the interviews are presented and discussed. The sections collect all answers from all interviewees on items, with distinctions made between different experience groups or prior knowledge groups as needed (see Figure 5-1 for the group distinction as defined in Chapter 4). When anecdotes or observations from individual interviewees are referenced this will be stated explicitly. Personal information of this interviewee relevant to the item will be provided (e.g. nationality, experience, job position), as long as this does not compromise the anonymity of the practitioner.

![Figure 5-1: Grouping of Practitioners](image)

Aside from the collected results of the four interview items, the sections will also debate global observations, patterns, and implications related to the items. Section 5.4 contains example figures for a manual with dimensions that are relevant to the practitioners in this study.
5.1 PERSONAL EXPERIENCE ITEM

The personal experience question that started each interview was used to establish how much exposure an interviewee has had to different cultures in his or her life. Usually this was then narrowed down to different cultures in the work environment, although for people with little work experience also other personal experiences were considered. There were no instances of individuals with zero intercultural experience in both their work and personal lives.

While discussing an interviewee’s experience the conversation would be shifted to how they felt about it (i.e. was it a positive or a negative experience), whether they noticed differences in behavior between themselves and the other person(s), and whether there has ever been any misunderstanding or confusion that could potentially be caused by cultural differences.

The goal of this item is to find out how aware the practitioner is of cultural differences prior to introducing cultural dimensions theory, and to check whether they take any specific measures to prepare for talking to or working with people from different cultures in the work environment. Of particular interest is whether there is a difference in behavior related to amount of work experience or having prior knowledge of cross-cultural theory.

5.1.1 COUNTRIES INCLUDED IN STUDY

Due to the qualitative nature of the interviews not all cultures are represented equally in this study. Figure 5-2 below provides an overview of which countries were mentioned in this study during the personal experience discussions, and how often. The data is split up between practitioners with high (>5 years in industry) or low experience.

![Countries Mentioned in Interviews](image)

**FIGURE 5-2: OVERVIEW OF COUNTRIES MENTIONED DURING INTERVIEWS BY EXPERIENCE LEVEL**

It was expected that the countries where Atkins has offices would be heavily featured in this study. Practitioners of any experience level greater than a few years (still well within the ‘inexperienced’ group of this study) are likely to have had exposure to American, British, Dutch and Indian coworkers.
and/or clients. Additionally, the US, UK, The Netherlands, and India also represent the cultures of the majority of the interviewees. It is only natural that they would compare other cultures to their own, resulting in an overrepresentation of those countries in the data.

From Figure 5-2 it appears that in particular the inexperienced interviewees mentioned only the ‘Atkins countries’, whereas more experienced interviewees mentioned other countries in addition to those. This is unsurprising, not only due to the greater life experience of the older group, but also do to potential prior work experience at other companies. The total number of countries discussed with the experienced group is higher, particularly due to the number of ‘non-Atkins countries’ they had worked with or in. Germany is an exception to the rule because of the close relationship between the Dutch office and the German aerospace industry. Dutch interviewees of all experience levels were extremely likely to have worked with Germans, while this is not necessarily the case for British, American, or Indian Atkins employees.

The other (non-Atkins) cultures listed in Figure 5-2 are mostly associated with developed countries with an aerospace industry. South America and Asia are underrepresented, and the entire African continent is missing from the study. This is inherent to the study and could not have been avoided with this sample of interviewees.

The data does not imply that all listed countries are well represented, or even represented based on their relative weight (i.e. how often they have been mentioned). It does, however, indicate which cultures are not represented at all and for which no conclusions can be drawn. Any conclusions based on the data from this study are limited to the set of cultures listed in Figure 5-2 at best, possibly even less when considering that some were only named by one or two individuals. This makes the set inappropriate for a large-scale global study, such as performed by Minkov or Hofstede, but the results do apply to the vast majority of intercultural exchanges occurring at Atkins.

Note that the objective of this study is to find out what people think about dimensional theory, not validation of individual dimensions. The data is clearly inappropriate for the latter, as is the small sample size, but useful observations can still be made with regard to the former. An additional limitation is that it appears that different cultures see dimensions differently, as was highlighted by Hofstede and Michael Bond’s Chinese Value Survey. The sample size in this study is already limited to 20 practitioners, and is even smaller if you consider the sample size per culture. The influence of the culture of the practitioner of his or her view of cultural dimensions theory is therefore not considered in this study. Practitioners are only split by level of experience and amount of prior knowledge about cross-cultural theory.
5.1.2 PREPARATION

The second part of the personal experience item was how the practitioners deal with cultural differences. This was assessed by asking specifically whether they have in the past prepared for interaction with people from different cultures, or whether they adapted on the spot or not at all instead. Figure 5-3 presents the distribution of the answers to this question for the different interview groups.

![Figure 5-3: How Practitioners Prepare, by Group](image)

It is interesting that the interview results presented in Figure 5-3 are similar for the experienced and inexperienced groups. The data shows little evidence of practitioners 'learning' from previous cross-cultural encounters and using that to prepare for future ones when they have more experience. Preparing for versus adapting to a different culture appears to be a personal preference, not a consequence of prior experience or knowledge about different cultures.

Most interviewees appear to have a preference for adaptation on the spot. When asking people about the reason for doing this the answer was nearly always lack of time or opportunity, never a lack of resources or information about the particular culture.

Practitioners that stated that they did prepare were asked how they did this. The majority indicated they talked to coworkers about what to expect, since it is likely that for any cross-cultural interaction in the office there would be an existing relationship between the business and the other country. Nobody claimed to make use of existing literature on cross-cultural analysis or specifically cultural dimensions to prepare for an interaction, even from the group that was somewhat familiar with the theory or had heard about it before.
Two individuals had interesting observations and were difficult to classify in Figure 5-3 due to their claim that they always adapted to the other party in a meeting, regardless of whether there is a cultural difference. These practitioners are both highly experienced engineer with managerial experience, and the prior expectation was that people in this group would prepare. In the follow-up discussion on how they did approach and behave in meetings one explained how he used life experience as opposed to necessarily work experience or cross-cultural knowledge; stating specifically that he gained “emotional intelligence with age”, and started to listen to other people more as well as in general “tried not to offend anyone”.

While this approach seems (very) sensible, it is difficult to classify in the framework of this item. When asked specifically how they would identify this approach both answered immediately and unanimously that it is a form of adaptation, one of them stating that it is not difficult at all to do this and that it has become an automatic response “like driving a car”. Their responses have been labeled as adaptive; the spirit of their approach will be discussed further in Section 5.4.

5.1.3 OBSERVATIONS

The purpose of this first part of the interviews was to establish the experience the interviewee has with different cultures and with intercultural communication, as well as finding out how people prepare for dealing with different cultures (if at all). This has been established, with the results summarized in Figure 5-2 and Figure 5-3.

Somewhat surprisingly, despite that interviewees were generally well-travelled and worked in an international environment, the extent of the practitioners’ awareness of cultural differences is fairly low. The expectation was that more people already made use of cross-cultural knowledge in real-life scenarios. It appears, however, that people are generally ill-prepared for communicating across cultures, despite that in some cases a valid argument was made for adaptation on the spot. This may work well for some individuals that have an exceptional amount of experience and introspection, but it does not provide much help to those seeking better understanding in cross-cultural encounters. Even when adaptation is preferred it would be beneficial to have and make use of knowledge on cultural dimensions to identify and interpret specific behaviors as they occur. Knowing what to look for and how to (not) react in some particular cases could be very valuable, even if the practitioners chooses to not prepare the interaction in advance.

Another relevant observation was the low percentage of practitioners that could be categorized in the low experience + high awareness group. The expectation was that members of this group would be young and not long out of school, and could be split in people that knew about the theory – probably from their university curriculum – and people that did not. In reality the vast majority of ‘low experience’ interviewees also had low cultural awareness or prior knowledge. An even distribution of the groups with regard to existing knowledge was therefore not possible.
5.2 **INTRODUCTION OF DIMENSIONS ITEM**

Having established the cultural experience of the sample of practitioners in the first item, the subject of the second item is the introduction of the concept of cultural dimensions. Based on the prior knowledge of the interviewee this item will either focus on dimensions they already know, or introduce the concept of dimensions by presenting a number of easy to understand examples.

5.2.1 **EXISTING KNOWLEDGE OF DIMENSIONS**

All practitioners were asked whether they had ever heard about the concept of cultural dimensions prior to the interview. This split the group into two, labeled people *with or without* prior knowledge. For the people *with* prior knowledge, Figure 5-4 shows of which dimensions they had heard. The columns are split up by the practitioner’s level of work experience. This statistic does not apply to the practitioners *without* prior knowledge of dimensions.

![Existing Knowledge of Dimensions](image)

**FIGURE 5-4: EXISTING KNOWLEDGE OF DIMENSIONS**

From the data in Figure 5-4 it is clear that cultural dimensions theory is not very well-known in the sample group of practitioners. Only Hofstede’s dimensions of Power Distance and Individualism were recognized by a somewhat relevant number of interviewees, with Uncertainty Avoidance, Indulgence, and Tradition also mentioned. The GLOBE dimensions Assertiveness, Collaborativeness, and Gender Egalitarianism, as well as Schwartz’s Mastery were not recognized (as dimensions) at all. Experienced practitioners were slightly more aware of cultural dimensions than the inexperienced group, but the difference was not significant and may be attributed to the presence of managers (who would be more likely to have had exposure to the theory) in the experienced group.

The explanation for this observation is not readily apparent. Hofstede’s work has been widely recognized and has been around since the 1990s, with the terms Power Distance and Individualism
dating back even further. It appears that not only was this subject barely covered in the schools and universities the practitioners attended, but it also has received very little attention from the companies that they have worked for. Considering the international nature of the engineering consultancy business this is somewhat surprising.

The consequences of the relative lack of existing knowledge of cultural dimensions is not necessarily a concern for the remained of this study. Whether or not the situation at Atkins is representative for a professional work environment, it is still interesting to test the concept of cultural dimensions on a group of practitioners that is not familiar with it beforehand.

5.2.2 INTRODUCTION OF DIMENSIONAL THEORY

The group that has some knowledge of cultural dimensions had the opportunity to discuss this in more detail, while the other group was introduced to the concept. In the latter case the definitions of dimensions and typologies were discussed, using the distinction as explained in Chapter 2. This was followed by some easy to understand example dimensions. Usually these were power distance, individualism, or indulgence vs. restraint.

Additional dimensions were introduced to the group that had prior knowledge and the individuals without prior knowledge that showed good understanding of the concept. The follow-up dimensions were tailored to the interviewee’s personal experience with different cultures that were discussed previously, i.e. one is chosen that would explain some phenomenon that they had observed themselves and that would help explain what they saw.

Figure 5-5 shows how well the practitioners in the high and low experience groups understood the concept of cultural dimensions. It appears that the understanding of the theory is very good, despite the relatively low recognition rates of individual dimensions discussed previously. Similar results are obtained for the experienced and the inexperienced interviewees.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Understanding of Concept, HIGH EXP</th>
<th>Understanding of Concept, LOW EXP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some</td>
<td>Some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FIGURE 5-5: LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING OF CONCEPT OF CULTURAL DIMENSIONS, BY EXPERIENCE GROUP**

A potential explanation for the exceptionally good understanding of cultural dimensions when introduced to the subject could be the profession and relative intelligence of the sample. Engineers are generally comfortable with numbers and should understand the concept of a linear scale well. As expected there were very few cases of interviewees that had trouble with the concept of cultural dimensions. Note that this measure does not account for specific dimensions, just the concept and
its definition as proposed by Hofstede (see Section 2.2). It has also not been considered whether the culture of the practitioners affected their understanding, although it should be noted here that all interviews were conducted in English and maybe being introduced to this in their own language could further increase understanding among some practitioners.

The interviewees were also asked if they believed this is an appropriate and sensible way of expressing cultural differences. Generally people agreed with this statement, although as the concept was new to so many practitioners they would be unlikely to disagree or come up with solid arguments against cultural dimensions on the spot.

One experienced individual that had lived in a number of different countries noted that he was not so sure if dimensions are “true”, but realized that it is a “logical way of looking at data”. This is an interesting statement mostly because it is unexpectedly correct. It is very similar to Michael Minkov’s opinion about cultural dimensions being nothing more (or less) than a construct. Most interviewees saw the cultural dimensions as a simple truth or fact that they were just introduced to; it was interesting that one person saw through this right away and realized that it is indeed nothing more than a way of looking at large amounts of data. Although not the norm, this person showed exceptional understanding of the concept.

5.2.3 Observations

The purpose of the second interview item was to determine the amount of existing knowledge practitioners had about the concept of cultural dimensions, and to introduce this concept to the ones that had none. In addition to this it was also established what people’s initial opinion of the concept was, before going into the details of individual dimensions.

The results of this item, shown in Figure 5-4 and Figure 5-5, show that while cultural dimensions theory is not known very well in this sample of practitioners, they did show excellent understanding of the concept when it was explained to them. It was surprising that not more practitioners were familiar with the theory, but nearly all interviewees understood the concept well enough to express relevant observations about individual dimensions that explained their own past experiences.

It is worthwhile to note here that most practitioners stated they not only understood the concept of dimensions, but they were also very enthusiastic about it. Individuals from different cultures and with different experience levels expressed their fascination with the relatively straightforward way to visualize cultural differences that they knew existed. Maybe this was due to the simple examples that were used, but people were fascinated by the idea and surprised they had not heard about it before.
5.3 Recognition of Dimensions Item

The purpose of the third item is to see which dimensions explain cultural differences that practitioners recognize from their own personal experience. Due to time constraints not each dimension has been discussed in every single interview. The dimensions listed here are the ones that have been discussed and resulted in meaningful observations or opinions. The goal of this item is to find out which dimensions are particularly useful to practitioners, and which ones they do not recognize.

There is some overlap between this item and the previous one, as the introduction of the concept of dimensions required some actual dimensions to be used as examples. The conversation would then naturally flow from the concept of dimensional theory into individual dimensions and whether the practitioners recognized any of them. This report splits the discussion of dimensional theory (Section 5.2.2) from any discussions on the content of individual dimensions (this section).

Note that this section is about practitioners recognizing behaviors that match certain dimensions, not the recognition of the actual dimensions from the theory. It was clear from the results of Item 2 (Section 5.2.1, Figure 5-4) that not many interviewees recognized the existing dimensions, or at least their labels.

5.3.1 Individualism

The concept of individualism versus collectivism was discussed in all interviews, either as an introduction to the subject or, for those who were familiar with the idea of cultural dimensions, to determine the extent of their knowledge.

Practitioners from both high and low individualism cultures recognized that there is a big difference in individualism between the Atkins office in India and the ones from the United States, England, and The Netherlands, in accordance with Hofstede’s ranking of those countries. Generally the interviewees were also able to think of other countries that would score in between, or further on the collectivistic side of the spectrum. This was done intentionally to ensure they understood the linear scale of the dimension, as opposed to just a high and a low individualism cluster.

There was no noticeable difference in understanding between the experienced and inexperienced interviewees, or the groups with and without prior knowledge. Some of the more experienced practitioners were fascinated by the correlation with national wealth. This often resulted in discussions about the direction of causation between the two, generally following the reasoning as presented by Hofstede (2010).

The correlation with power distance was also introduced to practitioners that showed good understanding of both dimensions, but in the few instances where this was attempted it appeared to be too complex. Explaining dimensions and what they measure was generally not an issue, but discussing overlapping dimensions and whether they measure one or two phenomena was out of scope for people that had just been introduced to the subject.

As expected, both the concept and the term ‘collectivism’ were confusing to people. It was easier to introduce this dimension as ‘high versus low individualism’ than as ‘individualism versus collectivism.’ It is not clear whether this is due to the word itself or due to the relatively high
individualism index of most interviewees. This was further complicated by the fact that for the interviewees from more collectivistic cultures, English was not their first language.

5.3.2 Power Distance

Power Distance was also discussed in all interviews, mainly because it measures a phenomenon that is easy to visualize in the workplace. Especially for inexperienced practitioners this was expected to be an easier dimensions to understand than individualism.

An example that was used to introduce and discuss power distance was the level of comfort a subordinate has with entering the office or generally approaching a superior. Repeating this example in all interviews resulted in the following observations:

- Practitioners from both high and low PDI cultures state that they recognize the phenomenon and acknowledge the behavior of their own culture
- Practitioners from high PDI cultures state in most cases (±75%) that they do not do this themselves; mention that culture at Atkins is different
- Practitioners from low PDI cultures state in nearly all cases (>90%) that they do this themselves as well; seldom mention Atkins specifically
- Practitioners from low PDI cultures, when asked, do not believe Atkins is particularly good or bad at communication between different organizational levels

It is interesting that practitioners from low and higher power distance cultures observe this dimension in a different way. One possibility is that Atkins and its British roots have created an uncharacteristically low PDI organizational culture in the local office in high PDI India, creating the impression among (high PDI) local employees that Atkins has a different culture from what they are used to. This would explain why employees in local offices with the same (low PDI) corporate culture – but in a similarly low PDI environment such as the UK or the US – would not notice anything unusual.

Practitioners from low PDI countries that have worked in different countries also recognized the power distance dimension in some personal experiences. It was noted that for example the French and the Japanese have very different office meetings with many non-written rules about who gets to speak, compared to a much looser and more open structure in the Netherlands.

One individual from a low PDI culture that worked as a manager in a high PDI country mentioned that, despite Atkins’ insistence on being ‘intercultural’, power distance and the concept of emotional distance between organizational layers was very much a real phenomenon that required him to adapt his style of leadership. Simple stating that people were welcome in his office or to talk to him was not enough encouragement for employees to adopt a lower power distance attitude. This confirms that this phenomenon is at least to some extent a real cultural difference, not just a product of the Atkins corporate culture.

Despite that the understanding of the concept was good, some observations did not match the country index scores calculated by Hofstede (2010). A number of interviewees expected a higher PDI ranking for Germany and many people overstate the difference in PDI between The Netherlands and the UK (actually all three have similar index scores). It is not clear what exactly caused this. Perhaps
German rule orientation (generally associated with uncertainty avoidance) led some practitioners to believe they are also more hierarchical. Or the office culture in The Netherlands is different from the one in England, potentially due to the significant difference in size, causing visitors to assume national differences that do not necessarily exist.

5.3.3 Uncertainty Avoidance

Hofstede’s uncertainty avoidance dimension was only discussed with interviewees that showed good understanding of the individualism and/or power distance index. It was considered pointless to discuss this more complex index with practitioners that had trouble identifying simpler cross-cultural phenomena. Despite that this further reduced the already small sample size, it still led to interesting observations.

As the four Atkins countries score relatively close to each other on the uncertainty avoidance index, the most common examples of uncertainty avoidance cultures that were used in the interviews were France and Germany. Many interviewees from the European Atkins offices had experience with French and German engineering teams or had even spent extended time periods on-site at local clients. Some American interviewees had experience with the highly uncertainty avoidant Japanese culture due to the intensive aerospace collaboration between the two countries.

Some practitioners were able to associate it with a personal experience, but in general this dimension was not as well understood as power distance. The difference between the otherwise similar cultures of The Netherlands and Germany was observed by in particular the Dutch interviewees that spend significant amounts of time in Germany. Unfortunately there were no German practitioners available to offer the complementary view from the other side.

One of the most uncertainty accepting cultures according to Hofstede’s index, is Great Britain. Many American interviewees, however, mentioned the relatively rigid and inflexible Brits in their personal experience as people that are hesitant to accept ambiguity. There could be a number of explanations for this that are not necessarily related to cultural differences. Aside from the statistical probability that the Brits they met are outliers on their country’s average uncertainty avoidance index, it is also possible (and even likely) that their experience is clouded by organizational structure of Atkins. Many of the interviewees worked in different offices around the world, reporting to Atkins’ main office in England. Because of this, many of the interviewee’s direct or indirect superiors were British. If this is their main experience with the British culture it is more than likely that it would affect their judgment and they misinterpret corporate policy for the personal beliefs of the people enforcing it.

As mentioned in the previous section, it is also possible that uncertainty avoidance is confused with power distance. Although they are separate constructs that measure different phenomena, it is understandable that to the layperson the idea of high power distance is somewhat similar to high uncertainty avoidance. Both are associated with a relatively rigid system where initiative and therefore possibly insecurity is taken away from the individual. When uncertainty avoidance is confused with risk avoidance, as discussed by Hofstede (2010), this correlation becomes more obvious. This could be particularly confusing to individuals with a low PDI and low UAI culture; which is a significant portion of the practitioners in this sample (i.e. interviewees from The Netherlands, the UK, the US).
Over half of the Interviewees had difficulties with this dimension. Usually they would understand the definition, but would not recognize it. One individual even stated that he does not believe it is an actual difference between national cultures.

Regardless of the disagreement among the sample, there appears to be some evidence for a dimension comparing uncertainty aversion between cultures. The ongoing debate about how to measure such a thing (as was discussed in Section 3.1.3) was never going to be resolved by this study, but it is interesting that some people do recognize an uncertainty-related difference between national cultures. The subject of how to measure such a dimension was considered out of scope for the interviews in this study, as the practitioners were already overwhelmed by the amount of new ideas presented to them.

5.3.4 Indulgence

The indulgence dimension was used as an example to introduce the concept of dimensional theory to practitioners that did not have a lot of experience with other cultures. With the more experienced interviewees the individualism or power distance dimension was used for this, and generally there was not enough time to get back to indulgences versus restraint later. The feedback on this dimension is therefore mostly from the inexperienced interview group.

The idea behind this dimension and the behaviors it explains were well understood by everybody. Indulgence, or Trompenaars’ variation Neutral vs. Affective, is highly visible and easy to spot by even the less experienced practitioners. It was particularly useful to use example countries to indicate the linearity of the scale and to highlight the difference between dimensions and typologies.

One individual, an engineer from the United States, mentioned an interesting personal experience at a previous employer, where he worked with a co-located team of Korean engineers. He noted specifically that he found it difficult to judge their reaction to presentations or instructions, as they did not show any signs or expressions indicating their agreement or disagreement. This corresponds to Hofstede’s Indulgence index (respective scores of the US and Korea: 68 and 29)(Hofstede, 2010). When introduced to the concept of the Indulgence dimension he did not associate it with this experience, but the description of Trompenaars’ construct and the terms ‘neutral’ and ‘affective’ resonated much better.

Attempts to explain to this practitioner how the two constructs measure the same reality and are essentially the same dimension were unsuccessful. It was also apparent in other dimensions, most notable individualism vs. collectivism and uncertainty avoidance, that the phrasing of the label(s) was essential to a layperson’s understanding of the concept. In the literature it was stated that the exact labels used for dimensions are irrelevant (Hofstede, Minkov), but to people that are unaware of the statistical foundations of a construct the use of simple and familiar terminology appears to correlate with their understanding of the construct.

5.3.5 Mastery

Schwartz’ Mastery dimension was only brought up during the interviews when the practitioner mentioned a personal experience that could possibly be explained by it. This occurred in six interviews, when people noticed the differences in ambition and desire to be successful between European countries (in this case the UK and The Netherlands) and the United States.
This observation corresponds to their respective Mastery scores in Schwartz’ dimension (Schwartz, 1994), as well as to Hofstede’s Masculinity vs. Femininity (Hofstede, 2010). To avoid confusion the label ‘masculinity’ was not used during the interviews. The gender-neutral ‘mastery’ is more appropriate for interviews on the work floor and captures the same intent (see also Section 3.2.3 for concerns regarding the masculinity dimension and label).

One term used by multiple practitioners to describe mastery-oriented behavior was ‘assertiveness’. This implies agreement with Hofstede’s combination of the two phenomena into one dimension (Hofstede’s masculinity construct, regardless of the label), and goes against the proposal by Project GLOBE (House et al, 2004) to separate them.

It is, however, unclear whether the interviewees were talking about the same thing as Hofstede and Project GLOBE. It is logical to associate assertiveness with ambition or competitiveness and it is indeed a logical combination of behaviors for some individuals. Maleki and De Jong (2014) (See also Section 3.7) also did not deny that the dimensions could correlate, just that for fundamental reasons the two constructs should be considered separately. This is beyond the scope of the interviews however; no further conclusions are provided by this study on how the concepts of assertiveness, ambition, mastery, and masculinity should be defined or combined.

One a more pragmatic note, it is interesting and useful that some practitioners recognized cultural differences between people that are related to their preference for mastery vs. harmony, and/or their preference for ambition and assertiveness over tenderness. The conceptualization and the labeling of such a dimension are up for debate, but in line with the final note in the Section 5.3.4 on Indulgence it is important to present complex constructs to practitioners with a nomenclature that they can understand.

5.3.6 ASSERTIVENESS

As mentioned under the Mastery dimension, practitioners associated assertiveness with ambition and the desire for success. Despite the mention of assertiveness, nobody considered it as a dimension measuring itself until they were told to. The first instinct among all practitioners that discussed this dimension was to associate assertiveness with Schwartz’s Mastery, or even with Hofstede’s power distance or individualism.

The link to power distance is not unexpected, and was discussed in Chapter 4 as potentially confusing to practitioners due to the assumed higher assertiveness of people in leadership roles. One could imagine that the Atkins senior management is attributed with higher assertiveness scores than what would be representative of their culture, purely based on their individual high assertiveness that helped them achieve career success. The opposite is also possible, where individuals belonging to a very hierarchical (high power distance) culture would see individuals from a low power distance country as more assertive, because of the more casual relationship with their managers.

Regardless of the actual correlation of assertiveness with mastery and/or power distance, there appeared to be confusion about its conceptualization. From the sample considered in this study it is still unclear whether assertiveness should be its own dimension, as suggested by Project GLOBE, or a trait of another dimension, for example Schwartz’s Mastery or a form of Hofstede’s Masculinity. The
details of this were considered out of scope for the practitioners that were just exposed to the concept of dimensional models.

A potential solution is to adopt Hofstede’s combination of mastery and assertiveness in one construct, but with a different label, as ‘masculinity vs. femininity’ is too controversial. A new way to measure this dimension would need to be found to avoid the confusing country scores currently obtained in the masculinity dimension. From the interviews conducted in this study there appears to be some support for a dimension with this intent, but much more research into the conceptualization of this ‘new’ dimension is needed before it can be presented to practitioners. The current situation is too complex to obtain meaningful feedback from interviewees that are new to the subject.

5.3.7 TRADITION

Inglehart and Baker’s (2000) Tradition vs. secular-rational dimension was not introduced to practitioners, but in one interview it came up when discussing differences between the US and the UK. This particular practitioner noticed that, despite its image as a high-tech global leader, the US has a number of very old-fashioned traditions. This can possibly be explained by the US’s relatively high tradition index.

Inglehart’s dimension was explained and the practitioner showed good understanding of the concept. It was, however, very difficult to visualize the tradition scores of other Anglo/Western countries, and aside from the United States only stereotypical answers were found. Hofstede’s long-term orientation does not provide the answer either, as the label of this dimension is confusing and does not appear to correlate with the question items and the actual construct it measures. Minkov’s Monumentalism is better defined, but was considered too complex to discuss during the interview.

An interesting observation from the same practitioner was the relatively large differences in the tradition index that can be found within the United States, for example between the South and the East or West Coast. Instead of focusing on Inglehart’s dimension a large part of the follow-up discussion was about national dimensions and differences within countries. Whether this same reasoning can be applied to other dimensions as well is not clear, but it appears that the tradition dimension will result in higher average scores in rural areas than in urban areas in the same country (and not only in the US).

This practitioner and others that questioned the validity of national dimensions were not always satisfied with the explanation along the lines of Section 2.2 where it was explained how there is essentially no alternative to using national dimensions as opposed to smaller units of measurement. Perhaps it is difficult for individuals to consider their own average culture without making distinctions between regions or other geographical areas, or between an average culture and their individual ‘culture’ or index score.

5.3.8 DIMENSIONS NOT Discussed

The Collaborativeness and Gender Egalitarianism dimensions from Project GLOBE were not discussed during any of the interviews.
As mentioned in Chapter 4, the problem with Collaborativeness is the association with job performance. Perhaps it would be interesting to assess whether practitioners notice any differences in average collaboration tendencies across cultures, but there was no politically correct way to assess this during the relatively short interviews done in this study.

The same reasoning applies to the omission of the Gender Egalitarianism dimension. It would be interesting to assess the perceived differences in the treatment of women between cultures, but it is extremely challenging to bring this up in an interview in the work environment.

5.3.9 Overview

The goal of this interview item was to determine which dimensions are recognized by the practitioners and whether this helped them explained past experiences. Based on the results described in Sections 5.3.1 and 5.3.2 it is clear that both Individualism and Power Distance were well understood, with the only minor issue the term ‘collectivism’. Indulgence vs Restraint was discussed with fewer people, but was also well understood.

The Uncertainty Avoidance dimension was more controversial, and was understood by about half the group. Mastery was also received positively by about half of the interviewees, with some confusion regarding the overlap with Assertiveness. Tradition was understood in the one interview it was mentioned, but aside from the United States it only provided stereotypical results about developed vs undeveloped nations.

From the GLOBE dimensions, Assertiveness was not well understood and Collaborativeness and Gender Egalitarianism were not discussed. This is due to the potentially sensitive nature of those subjects on the workfloor, as was mentioned in Section 4.1. See also the reflections in Section 6.3 for more on the Gender Egalitarianism dimension.

There were no significant differences between the different experience groups or prior knowledge groups. Prior knowledge in general was not very high, and experience did not appear to affect the practitioners’ ability to understand the different dimensions and associate them with personal experiences. There were some interesting observations from the more experienced practitioners, but the inexperienced ones were just as able to observe cultural differences along the dimensions presented to them.

Table 5-0-1 summarizes the findings on the recognition of dimensions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Brought up</th>
<th>Explained Past Experiences?</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individualism</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Generally well understood, some trouble with term ‘collectivism’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power Distance</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Easy dimension, well understood by most.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainty Avoidance</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>Difficult dimension, but understood by some. Not understood or denied by others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indulgence vs. Restraint</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Easy dimension, good for beginners. Better understood under Neutral/Affective name.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mastery</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>Confusing to most, some understanding in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>more extreme index scores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertiveness</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Confusing to most, overlap with Mastery and PD, difficult in small sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tradition</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>Some understanding in one case, but confusing definition and country scores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborativeness</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Not discussed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Egalitarianism</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Not discussed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.4 IMPROVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES ITEM

The final discussion item of the interviews was about different ways in which the dimensional model could be rolled out office-wide, in order to introduce more people to the subject.

Four options were suggested to the practitioners to improve on cross-cultural interaction at work using the dimensional approach. The first option was a guide or manual with information about a number of different cultures, customizable to specific countries of interest to the business or to the practitioner. The second option was a similar guide, but focused on an individual’s own culture and relative country scores. The third option suggested was a class-based approach, where someone familiar with the theory would teach employees the concept of cultural dimensions and relevant difference between countries of interest. This class could also be taught by an external party or consultant. The fourth and final option was one-on-one discussions between employees that would be exposed to different cultures, and local experts on cultural dimensions or specific cultures.

Note that is has not been assessed how the preference for certain method is affected by the interviewee’s culture. This would certainly be interesting, but requires a much larger sample size.

Figure 5-6 shows the results of this interview item. A slight majority of the practitioners indicated a preference for one-on-one meetings, but overall the opinions were mixed. Note that the two options with manuals combine to about the same percentage as the preference for one-on-one meetings. Again there was no significant difference between the interview groups, with the exception of a reluctance among experienced practitioners to support a class-based approach. All four options are discussed in more detail in this section, along with relevant observations from the interviews.

![Preference for Method to Improve Cross-Cultural Knowledge](image)

**FIGURE 5-6: PREFERENCE FOR METHOD TO IMPROVE CROSS-CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE**
Guide / manual with presentation of dimensions

One of the options to obtain more widespread knowledge of cultural dimensions in an organization is to create a document with a presentation of the theory. This guide or manual could outline the concept of dimensions in a way similar to Chapter 2, perhaps in a more condensed manner to remove ambiguity and discussions on academic disagreements over definitions.

It is clear from the data in Figure 0-1 that this is not the preferred method for the practitioners. Many interviewees voiced their concern about not being able to discuss the theory and ask questions. Whereas the concept of dimensions is fundamentally not very complex, it is still unfamiliar to most people and they are likely to require examples from their own experience to fully understand it. This is something that a document can never capture.

Another concern with writing up dimensions and country scores is that a manual is inherently too short to capture the subtleties of cultural differences, while a longer document will probably not be read in its entirety. This could lead to oversimplification and stereotypes. Other forms of instruction could put more focus on avoiding this.

Figure 0-2 shows how an example figure could look for such a document. This example describes Hofstede’s Power Distance dimension to practitioners at Atkins, showing the four countries of interest and their respective positions along the dimension. The exact index scores are not relevant to the practitioners, as long as the relative positioning is approximately scaled. A similar figure can be created for countries associated with key clients or any other combinations of cultures. Adding more than 5 or 6 countries to a scale is not recommended in order to keep the figure readable and now overwhelm the practitioner with irrelevant country data.

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Power Distance (PDI) is the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally (Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 2010).

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FIGURE 5-7: EXAMPLE FIGURE FOR MANUAL TARGETED AT PRACTITIONERS AT ATKINS AEROSPACE
Guide / manual with own index described along dimensions

The main difference between this guide and the previous is that this own would focus on an individual’s own average culture, as opposed to an overview of others. The intent of this approach is to make people aware of their own position on a dimension, for example to inform a Dutch practitioner that his (likely) personal preference for power distance is low compared to others, and to be aware of this when meeting people from other cultures. The key difference between showing all cultures is that this forces the practitioner to see how he or she is likely to be perceived by others.

Clearly this requires a variety of documents to be created for different cultures, but the upside should be that a less stereotypical picture is created. A practitioner that is intimately familiar with his own culture will be able to understand his or her own country index score, without creating a stereotypical view of a lesser known culture.

Figure 0-3 shows an example for the same Power Distance dimension as before, but only targeted at Dutch practitioners. This shows them that their (average) PDI score is very much on the low end of the spectrum, indicating that they can expect most other cultures to be more hierarchical. While not providing the same amount of information as Figure 0-2, this approach avoids the ranking of countries and focuses instead on the practitioner’s own (perceived) values.

**FIGURE 5-8: EXAMPLE FIGURE FOR MANUAL TARGETED AT PRACTITIONERS FROM THE NETHERLANDS**

Class-based Instruction

Some practitioners preferred a class-based approach over a written manual, stating that a verbal instruction and the ability to ask questions was critical to their own understanding of the material. Advantages of a class-based approach are the opportunity to stress the real-life implications of dimensions, and the ability to focus on specific cultures of interest to the group.

Considering how quickly people understood the concept from the relatively short interviews, it is reasonable to believe they could be taught the main aspects of cultural dimensions theory in a few short classes or a full-day workshop. An experienced instructor could cover the main aspects of the theory, as well as a number of relevant dimensions and what they can be used for. Especially combined with reference material this can be a useful approach, as it would still offer the practitioners a point of contact to ask questions to. From the interviews it is clear that many people
were concerned about having to figure out the theory by themselves, and many did indeed ask questions during the introduction of the theory in Item 2.

More experienced practitioners tended to be less enthusiastic about the class-based approach. Perhaps they feel they have outgrown this method of teaching and prefer a one-on-one or written approach.

**One-on-one discussions**

The majority of practitioners (40%) stated a preference for one-on-one discussions, similar to the interviews done in this study. These discussion could be led by an external or internal expert, or with any other practitioners (perhaps a coworker) that is familiar with the culture of interest.

It is possible that the significant interest in this approach is due to a form of acquiescence, with people being inclined to prefer the method in which they had just learned the theory themselves. Whether this is the case is difficult to determine without trying out the different approaches on a sample of practitioners.

Of course both the one-on-one discussions and the class-based approach can be combined with the manuals. This would be more time consuming to prepare, but could potentially offer the benefits of both. In many interviews a whiteboard or piece of paper was used to draw out dimensions along a line. Offering practitioners a guide with an overview of what has been discussed, maybe focused on specific cultures of interest, could be the solution.

**Overview**

Unfortunately no clear conclusions can be drawn on this item. The practitioners were fairly evenly divided between the different options, and were generally not opposed to the manual or the one-on-one discussions. It is likely that at this point of the interview they were somewhat overwhelmed by the new information and were still processing it themselves, making it harder to objectively think about how to teach others.

Despite the disagreement on the preferred method, practitioners overwhelmingly stated that they think more training on the subject of cultural differences would be useful. Interviewees were eager to find out more about cultural dimensions and believed they could use it in practice if they would know more.

A number of more experienced practitioners that were not in management noted that it would be critical to have the entire organization, including managers, learn more about different cultures. This would also ensure that other people take it seriously. Managers that were interviewed did not seem opposed to taking the training themselves, so this should be achievable.

An interesting observation from one practitioner was that with intensive training people may start to “hunt” for cultural differences that they hear or read about. This could lead to some differences being blamed on different cultures, even though this does not necessarily need to be the case. It is possible that this is true, although it is hard to argue that more information about cultures could be worse than none at all. The practitioner agreed with this and has a preference for a class-based
approach to at least guarantee that people get to talk to each other about the theory, as opposed to everybody interpreting it in his or her own way.
6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section summarizes the conclusions found from the results discussed in Chapter 5. A way forward for future research is proposed, as well as reflection on this research project and what could have been done better.

6.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

All research questions established in the first chapter have been answered at least to some extent. They are presented here one by one, as well as the other conclusions that were found during the interview process.

1. What research has been done on the phenomenon of cultural dimensions and what theoretical models currently exist?

As shown by the overview in Chapters 2 and 3, an immense amount of research has been done in this field. Some of the most well known cultural dimensions have been introduced in this report, but many more can be found in the literature and even more will be created in the future.

What is relevant here, however, is that it appears that practitioners are not very aware of this. Some interviewees had some experience with some dimensions, either from their university education or through training on the job. However, nobody was even remotely aware of the magnitude of this field. The names Hofstede and Trompenaars would occasionally ring a bell, but those only scratch the surface of the knowledge on cultural dimensions in the world.

This was unexpected.

Atkins is a successful engineer services provider that operates in 28 countries, with the aerospace team working intensively across four or five. Employees are highly educated and the company provides ample opportunities for training, self-learning, development, et cetera. The practitioners that have been interviewed all had some experience working with other countries, half of them extensively. And still, not many of them were aware of the existing theory on cultural dimensions, let alone able to apply it in their daily jobs. Every single one acknowledged that in their daily jobs they are often confronted with people from different cultures.

The question is why. When presented with some simple dimensions nearly all practitioners understood them well and were very enthusiastic about the possible applications. About half of them understood more complex dimensions (such as uncertainty avoidance or mastery) after a brief discussion. Every single one of them would be able to make use of cultural dimensions prior to visiting a country or signing in to a teleconference with just a few days of instruction on this theory.

It is possible that the relatively low amount of prior knowledge about the subject is due to the lack of focus on it in engineering studies. When companies such as Atkins do not provide training and the university programs do not either, it is unlikely for engineers to be aware of the theory. It is not the lack of research or available material that is the problem; it is the lack of interest in it.
The answer to the first research question is simple: there is a lot of research done on the subject of cultural dimensions and it is easily available in fairly digestible formats (e.g. Hofstede’s 2010 version of his book is mostly readable to the layperson. So is Trompenaars’ book.). The more difficult question is why people are not aware of this and specifically why companies such as Atkins do not provide more training on the subject. This will be addressed in more detail in the recommendations (Section 6.2).

2. How do existing models of cultural dimensions interrelate and what criticism is there on these theories?

There is significant interrelation between the different models, and there is significant criticism on virtually all available models. None of the models capture the absolute truth (which would be impossible). Criticism on even the more popular is prevalent, and sometimes downright aggressive. This is good in a way, as constructive criticism is important, but it makes it very difficult for a layperson to understand what is going on.

From the practitioners themselves there was not much criticism at all. Maybe they were still too overwhelmed by the new information that was presented to them, but the vast majority of interviewees understood the concepts well and was not too bothered by the academic nitpicking. They would need more exposure to the subtleties of the different theories to be able to fully understand how they correlate. Due to the focus on the clusters from Maleki and De Jong there was not much discussion on how some dimensions are similar and measure the same reality.

The answer of this research questions is addressed in more detail in the discussion section of Chapter 3.

3. What do practitioners think of the applicability of the available models and how do they currently apply them?

As highlighted by the data in Section 5.2.2, understanding of the concept of cultural dimensions and the available models was excellent. It was to be expected that some of the more difficult constructs would require more time than was available during the interviews, but very important and useful dimensions such as individualism, power distance, and indulgence were well understood by practitioners from different cultures.

It is important that the response to the concept of dimensions was so positive. To many people this was new, and ideally more time would be spent on it before moving on to individual dimensions and linking those to personal experiences of the practitioner. Perhaps the large percentage of engineers in this sample group skewed the results somewhat, but it can be tentatively concluded that a group of professionals have no trouble understanding cultural dimensions.

How they currently apply this information was already implied by the answers to the previous questions: They do not. It is clear from Section 5.1.2 that at least the practitioners at Atkins did not have the habit of preparing for intercultural exchanges. This is very possibly related to their lack of awareness of the existing theories. Additionally, as an organization Atkins apparently does not invest a lot of effort into training people on this subject.
4. What expectations would practitioners have from a handbook or a set of guidelines and what will be the main conditions for such a handbook?

The results were less conclusive for this research question. Opinions were divided among the practitioners between different options for improving understanding of cultural dimensions. A slight majority preferred class-based or one-on-one approaches over a handbook or set of guidelines, but there was no clear preference for any of the suggestions.

Perhaps this was due to the timing in the interviews. People were exposed to a lot of new information, and where not ready for an open question about how to learn more about it. This will be discussed in more detail in the reflections (Sections 6.3).

From the high interest in the subject it was clear that the practitioners would be open to having a set of guidelines, regardless of in what format these would be provided. When exposed to the sometimes significant differences between cultures most practitioners expressed their surprise about not knowing more about this.

5. How can the dimensional model be useful for practitioners and how can relevant theoretical knowledge be transitioned into practical guidelines or other applications?

This is the key question for attempting to help practitioners make more use of cultural dimensions. In order to achieve this there are two prerequisites:

- Practitioners must be willing to learn
- Learning material needs to be made available to them

The first is clearly true based on the results from this study and the answers to the previous questions. The second item is more difficult. The material exists, as was discussed in the answer to question 1. The difficulty is in converting this material into a more easily digestible format that practitioners can use and providing the opportunity to become familiar with it.

The practitioners themselves were not sure about their preference for a format, but perhaps this is not even necessary if the theorists make the theory itself more readable. When questioning practitioners about their recognition of dimension in personal experiences they were significantly better at recognizing dimensions that were phrased in a familiar terminology. This is not to say that “monumentalism versus flexumility” is not a good dimension, but it appeared to be a challenge for laypersons to associate such terms with actual behaviors. The similar dimension of Tradition (vs secular-rational) from Inglehart and Baker is easier to understand just because of the label. Individualism and power distance or hierarchy are also terms that people know, therefore they are more likely to understand these dimensions. Recall from Section 5.3.1 that collectivism was understood by more people when it was explained as ‘low individualism’.

In the current academic landscape, authors that use more practitioner-friendly terms, for example Fons Trompenaars, can expect a serious backlash from their academic peers. What is needed is a model that is statistically as rigorous as those by Hofstede, Schwartz, Inglehart, Minkov, and others, but understandable in a way more like Trompenaars or some of Hofstede’s dimensions. This should keep the academic community happy, as well as the practitioners that intend to use those dimensions.
6. What would a handbook for practitioners actually look like and what set of dimensions would it use?

This question has changed throughout the process. A handbook was the intended format for presenting dimensions to practitioners, but from the results discussed in Section 5.4 it is not clear whether this is actually the format they would prefer.

Aside from those results, there are other reasons to be cautious with providing a simplified document to present cultural dimensions. The practitioners in this study were very eager to use dimensions and started to see them everywhere as soon as they had learned about it. Although it was satisfying that they were so interested, it could lead to unnecessary stereotyping and even outright profiling if a practitioner is provided with a list of dimensions with country scores and no further context.

Of course it is possible that this sample of mostly engineers was somewhat more instrumentalistic than other practitioners would be, but it is a noteworthy observation that the group treated the information in this way. When cultural dimensions are seen as simply a tool it might cause practitioners to miss the finer points of cultural differences between nations.

This brings the conclusion to a paradox. On one hand there is a clear need for practitioners to obtain some knowledge of different cultures, as they are currently grossly unaware of the importance of cultural differences. Cultural dimensions are an excellent tool to highlight those differences, and the practitioners appear to agree with this. However, on the other hand there is the risk of oversimplification. Solely providing a group of practitioners with a list of dimensions (even a curated list with dimensions deemed appropriate for laypersons) leads to the risk of instrumentalism.

The solution to this paradox problem is not obvious. Not providing any training to practitioners is essentially the status quo. This would not improve the situation. However, now it appears that teaching practitioners about cultural dimensions can result in the unforeseen risk of instrumentalism. Finding the right amount of training required for sufficient understanding is difficult, as this is likely to vary between practitioners. This study showed that differences in level of experience and amount of prior knowledge among practitioners affect their understanding. These effects are expected to be more significant when considering a larger sample. Note that the practitioners in this study were fairly similar in background and education, and they are likely to be bonded by the corporate culture at Atkins. More variation will occur in a larger scale study.

It is clear that a half our one-on-one discussion, as done in this study, is insufficient for full understanding. This was also not the goal of the study. More research is needed to establish how much training is needed to not only teach cultural dimensions, but also develop an understanding of how they should be interpreted.
6.2 OVERVIEW OF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following list of conclusions have been extracted from Chapter 5 and the answer to the research questions in Section 6.1:

- Despite that the practitioners in this sample were generally well-travelled and worked in an international environment, the extent of their awareness of cultural differences is fairly low.
- Cultural dimensions theory is not well-known in this sample of practitioners.
- Generally the practitioners showed excellent understanding of the concept when it was explained to them. Understanding of individual dimensions was mixed and varied by level of experience and prior knowledge.
- Practitioners were very interested and enthusiastic about cultural dimensions. Individuals from different cultures and with different experience levels expressed their fascination with the relatively straightforward way to visualize cultural differences that they knew existed.
- It was apparent in a number of dimensions (individualism vs. collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, indulgence vs. restraint) that the phrasing of the label(s) was essential to the practitioners’ understanding. Simple and familiar terminology correlated significantly with understanding of the construct and recognition of behaviors.
- Useful dimensions were: Individualism, Power Distance, Indulgence.
- Controversial dimensions were: Uncertainty Avoidance, Mastery, Tradition.
- Practitioners expressed an interest in further learning, but were fairly evenly divided between different methods. Generally leaning towards a manual or one-on-one discussions, or a combination of the two.

Those conclusions are interesting and in some cases unexpected. This study is one of the first to test cultural dimensions on practitioners. Previous studies have focused mainly on the dimensions themselves, not necessarily on the people that use them outside of the academic world.

The conclusions regarding the prior knowledge of practitioners are useful to Atkins and similar organizations, as it shows them that they may have a blind spot in this area. Knowing that their employees who work in cross-cultural teams are unprepared is important and allows these organizations to focus on improvement in this area.

It is useful to theorists that their dimensions are well understood by practitioners. This study shows which dimensions are easier to understand that others, and attempts to explain why. It also shows that interest in dimensional theory is high. This information can be used to develop better dimensions in the future, or rephrase existing dimensions into more practitioner-friendly terminology.

Further research is recommended to study more what practitioners want and what can be done to help them better with the subtleties of intercultural communication without reverting to oversimplification. This leads to the following recommendations:

A recommendation for theorists is to focus on accessibility of their work. Academic language is fine, as is academic rigor, but the labels and question items associated with some dimensions are frankly ridiculous. Pragmatism is required. It should always be remembered that dimensions are a made up construct, intended to make a large database easier to comprehend. There is no point in creating
dimensions that do not simplify the underlying dataset. Layperson practitioners can understand cultural dimensions and have the ability to comprehend moderately complex dimensional models. Their understanding, however, can be greatly increased by using a terminology that is at least somewhat familiar to them. Similarly, question items in large-scale surveys need to be phrased in a way that is understood by all.

A recommendation for practitioners is to remain practical, without becoming too instrumentalistic. This is difficult, and can only be achieved through experience. A handbook or guideline with dimensions will not suffice. Attempt to be aware of one’s own cultural biases and where it can reasonably be expected that other people will have different views. Most of all, talk to people and listen. Dimensions are a useful guideline, but not an absolute truth and not a tool that can be used to predict how each and every individual will behave or respond.

A recommendation for organizations is to emphasize education on cultural differences. When it is expected that employees work in cross-cultural teams it should be obvious that some training is required. Just the fact that team members are able to communicate in a common language is insufficient to assume full mutual understanding. Cultural differences are real and can have real effects on efficiency, quality, and morale in an organization. Training does not have to be difficult and can start with relatively straightforward one-on-one or class-based discussions.

A recommendation for further research is to focus more practitioners and what they need. This project assumed a handbook would help people, but it only does that to some extent. It would be extremely interesting to test out different methods on samples of practitioners, instead of just asking them for their preference. Unfortunately, time constraints did not allow for this experiment in this study.

This qualitative study showed that interest in cultural dimensions exists, but a larger scale quantitative study could provide more definite results. Specifically the state of prior knowledge across different fields would be a good one to test in a quantitative manner. This could potentially help in identifying appropriate methods for teaching cultural dimensions to practitioners.

Another interesting point of further research is the clustering of dimensions. Maleki and De Jong (2014) made the huge collection of data a lot more manageable, but some of the original authors might not agree with the clusters. It would be interesting to see Hofstede or Minkov think about dimensions in such a way, instead of criticizing other work.
6.3 REFLECTIONS

As always, many things could have been done differently in hindsight. Here are a number of reflections on aspects of this research study that could have been improved.

The assumption that a handbook would be useful to practitioners (somewhat implied by the phrasing of research questions 4 and 6) proved to be at least partially incorrect. Maybe the practitioners should never have been asked for their preference, and simply been provided with an example handbook. After a half hour of new information they were unable to assess accurately what would be the best way to increase understanding of cultural dimensions.

Related to this is the duration of the interviews. Interviews longer than 45 minutes to an hour would have been impractical, but the amount of new information was difficult to present in less than 45 minutes. Part of this was due to the expectation that prior knowledge would be higher. The allotted time was enough to explain what a dimension is and to provide some examples, but it was not possible to discuss the same dimensions with everybody. As the sample size was already small this made it very difficult to compare results to each other.

Another consequence of this unmet expectation is the relative thinness of the results. It was expected that more information would be extracted from each interview, but as more time was needed to explain the dimensions there was less time for the practitioners to provide feedback. The total amount of collected data was therefore lower. This was difficult to correct during the process, and there was not sufficient time to conduct additional interviews.

It also proved to be more difficult than expected to extract useful information from the interviews. Many responses were inconclusive and similar, making it difficult at times to distinguish between the different interview groups. The format was intentionally unstructured, but perhaps a more rigid format would help in post-processing the results.

However, on a positive note, the interviews were well received by the practitioners. They seemed to enjoy it and many wrote back to see how the study was progressing. A written survey or questionnaire would have led to completely different results. For the purpose of this study the choice for qualitative interviews was the right one. The issues with the practical time limit had therefore to be taken for granted.

A concern that was already addressed in Chapter 4 was the discussion of the Gender Egalitarianism dimensions. The decision was made to not present this potentially controversial subject on the work floor. Perhaps that says something about the United States or organizational culture in a big company, but it was simply not an option. In hindsight there would have been ways around this, by phrasing the question the right way. The risk that practitioners would respond in noncommittal or stereotypical ways remains, but at least that would have led to some (potentially useful) conclusions on this subject. Those are now missing from this study.
REFERENCES


