



## Review Paper

# Does the Current State of Knowledge Need Intercultural Interactions and Intercommunications Research Among Cultures?

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## Abstract

*This paper gives a short overview of the main purports and approaches in intercultural and beyond-cultural communications, we have tried to provide a short introduction into the field of empirical research into culture-oriented value variations and providing a brief outline of the significant works in this area.*

**Keywords:** Culture, interaction, knowledge, communication, intercultural.

## Introduction

Similarity and the so called 'intercultural' studies are getting more and more significant and invaluable in the world cultural conditions. Anyhow, despite its uplifting significance few research hunters and educated people count more on empirical cross cultural and research to extract their observed experiences. So the existing article attempts to give a brief description on conceptual approaches and findings which are helpful to interpret cultural and intercultural variances at a deeper level than the solely conductive one<sup>1</sup>.

The word 'culture' is more commonly used in everyday speaking routine in life to explain a number of telling purports; for instance, the word is nearly all the time used to describe purports such as 'organizational culture' and 'arts and culture'. What is common in all these purports is the inferring that culture is an abstract entity which gets a number of usually artificial, congregational and shared handy-works, behavioral samples, values or other purports extracted from the culture as a whole<sup>2</sup>. For instance, people working in an organization are said to "share the organizational culture" – but, at the same time, they define the organizational culture.

From the history viewpoint, the word is extracted from the Latin word 'colere', which might be translated as 'to build, 'to show interest', 'to grow or 'to plant. Thus 'culture' then referred to something that is extracted from, or made by the intervention of human beings– 'culture' is educated and developed<sup>3</sup>. With this definition in mind, the word 'culture' is often used to describe something refined, especially 'high culture', or describing the concept of picked, invaluable and educated handy-works of a community.

On a more fundamental level, 'culture' has been used to describe the cultural behaviors of people, such as implied by organizational or inter-organizational culture. This concept of

culture implies not only the shared cultural behaviors but also the shared values that support the cultural behaviors<sup>4</sup>. A corporation can be said, for instance, to enjoy a 'more competitive culture', thus implying that competitiveness is valued more within that corporation, or more exactly forms a core value within the corporation as a whole. Hence it can be argued, that 'competitiveness' is a shared value among those people working in that corporation. It also implies that the company as a whole will act very competitively in the way it is conducting its trade. Thus the concept describes both the deep underlying value as well as the conduct that can be observed. Notably, the concept does not necessarily imply that all employees share the same value to the same degree, but it does imply that the employees will be more probably to share the common value, and express it, if not necessarily individually, but collectively. On an expanded scale, Al -Olayan introduced the concept of "subjective culture", or a "characteristic way of perceiving its social environment" common to a culture. Based on these perceptions, and what has been perceived to ac well in the past, values are passed on from generation to generation<sup>5</sup>.

Not astonishingly this concept of shared values ending in shared conduct and actions has also been used to other groups outside one's own group or community. For instance, Kroeber and Kluckhohn's definition of culture reads 'Culture includes models, implicit and explicit, of and for conduct acquired and transmitted by symbols, making the clearly different achievements of human groups, including their inclusion in handy-works; the fundamental core of culture includes traditional (i.e. historically extracted and selected) ideas and especially their embodied values; cultural systems might, on the one hand, be considered as results of action, on the other, as conditional elements of future action.'

Their definition implies the existence of a big 'culture' (or meta-culture) of the different cultures that make up one's

community's culture. Using this concept, it is implied that one can tell between the culture of the community of which one forms part – and the culture of another community at large, of which one does not form part. This concept is shown in the usage of the word 'culture' when talking about, for instance, the 'Iranian culture' – or the multidimensional values and resulting conduct and handy-works that abstractly interpret Iran, the Iranian community as well as an Iranian at a high level of abstraction. In other words, the concept of 'Iranian culture' implies that the community shares some values and shows resultant conduct and handy-works, which can easily be told off from other 'cultures', such as the 'US culture' or the 'Turkish culture'<sup>6</sup>.

The idea of a shared, yet distinctive, set of values held by one community with resulting behavior and handy-works is also fundamental to the basic idea of 'culture' within the realm of intercultural communication. Hophman defined culture as *"the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the member of one group or category of people from another"*(p.5). Hophman expands the concept of 'group programming' by implying that culture could therefore be earthed between human nature, which is not programmed, nor programmable on the one side – and the individual's personality on the other side. This idea of the culture in the individual is particularly helpful for elaborating on the concept of culture on the one side – as well as allowing for the diversity of individual personalities within any one culture.

Another concept of culture, yet not a conflicting but rather refining concept, is put forward and expressed by Harris. Harris defines culture as often more subconscious. He compares culture to an intangible control mechanism working in our minds and imaginations. In his idea, we become only aware of this control tool when it is drastic change, for example by exposing and reflecting to a different culture. He believes that members of a given community, internalize the cultural components of that community, and act within the limits as set out by what is 'culturally acceptable': *"Culture has always dictated where to draw the line separating one thing from another. These lines are arbitrary, but once learned and internalized they are treated as real. In the West a line is drawn between normal sex and rape, whereas in the Arab world is much more difficult, for a variety of reasons, to separate these two events."*

So far, we have considered the definition of culture as a concept that is subconscious most of the time, and which represents a set of shared values that show themselves in the conduct and other acts of a given community. Culture is also 'programmed' – or learned, i.e. it does not form part of the human nature and it is distinct from individual personality, however it is shared by the members of one community<sup>7</sup>.

Spencer-Oatey stretches out the concept of culture. She introduces a number of many factors apart from values and

resultant behavior/handy-works, including a description of the functions that 'culture' performs: *"Culture is a fuzzy set of attitudes, beliefs, behavioral norms, and basic suppositions and values that are shared by a group of people, and that influence each member's behavior and his/her interpretations of the "purport" of other people's behavior."*

The inclusion of an descriptive factor in the culture purport is significant in as far as this explains not only what culture is, but also the reaction which culture does in everyday life. It importantly expands and clarifies the idea hinted at in Harris's definition, i.e. the part of culture as both an influence factor for behavior as well as an interpretation factor of conduct. The interpretative role of culture, as mentioned by Spencer-Oatey, is especially significant when considering beyond-cultural interactive communications, or reactions towards results grasped in a different cultural situation.

Concluding, we can say that 'culture' consists of various factors and elements that are shared by a given community, and that it acts as an interpretive frame of conduct.

## **Towards Multidimensional Infrastructures of Culture**

As described above, culture consists of various levels. At the most base, 'culture' consists of two levels: a level of values, or an intangible level, and a tangible level of resulted conduct or handy-works of some other forms<sup>8</sup>. This purport of culture is included in the popular 'iceberg model' of culture. The multilevel nature of culture is important because of several angles: It clarifies a tangible field as well as an area that is not immediately tangible, but that can be derived by cautious attention to the tangible elements of the cultural system as we comprehend.

Anyway, regarding culture as utterly a two-level set seems to be too basic for a purport model of culture. Hophman suggests a set of four layers, each of which embodies the lower level, as it depends on the lower level, or is an end of the lower level. In his view, 'culture' is like an onion: a set which can be peeled off, layer by layer, in order to bring out the contents.

At the core of Hophman's model of culture are values, or in his words: *"broad tendencies to prefer certain states of affairs over others"*. These values form the most concealed layer of culture. Such values represent the opinions that people have about how things "should be". As such, Hophman also stresses the supposition that values are profoundly affecting conduct.

Over the values, Hophman explains in details three levels of culture that are more clearly observable: i. Rituals, such as parts of ceremonies and ways of conducting and respect, ii. Heroes, such as admired people who serve as a sample for conduct, iii. Symbols, such as words, color or other handy-works that convey a special purport.

In Hophman's model 'practices', a set of tangible practices that convey an intangible cultural purport stretches out across all the three outer layers and includes within these. The concept of 'practices' is however somehow confounding as it seems related to some extent to rituals and symbols, yet distinct from these. In practice, Hophman's model represents an extension of the previously mentioned two-layered model of culture, where the outer layer has been stretched to allow for a more pure analysis of the tangible results of cultural values.

Thompson and Hampden-Turner render a similar onion-like model of culture. However, their model expands the core level of the very basic two-layered model, rather than the outer level. In their view, culture consists of basic suppositions at the core level. These basic suppositions are somewhat like to 'values' in the Hophman model, a lower level of values, i.e. basic suppositions are the utter core values that affect the more tangible values in the layer above. Thompson and Hampden-Turner give the example of human equality, as a basic supposition that gets a lot unasked.

However, it is hard to draw a precise line between the notion of 'basic suppositions' and 'values' as most are not inferred directly and are repeatedly not put into question. It therefore seems logical to combine these two levels again but to keep the label distinct<sup>8</sup>. Spencer-Oatey does this in the model she proposes by combining both basic suppositions and values in one 'segment' of the 'culture onion'.

In her view, basic suppositions and values in combination form the inner core of culture. This inner core is encircled by a more elementary level of 'beliefs, attitudes and practices'. This differentiation is useful, as it makes it possible to deeply account for upheavals in beliefs, for instance, with no more drastic change in values<sup>9</sup>.

In her model, 'beliefs, attitudes and practices' affect another layer, including 'sets, systems and constitutions', that are in turn encompassed by a separate outer layer of culture. In the split outer layer of culture, Spencer-Oatey situates 'handy-works & products' on the one side and 'rituals & conduct on the other side. Spencer-Oatey therefore differentiates between the demonstration of culture in human conduct model (behavior and conducts) on the one hand, and non-conductive items on the other (handy-works and products).

Spencer-Oatey's model has a number of benefits over the previously mentioned two models, from which it is extracted: It clarifies the purport that there are two levels of core values that are distinct yet have an unclear line. These two core values (or values and basic suppositions) are accounted for in the model.

The model also allows for another 'mental' level of culture which is more 'practical': The introduction of a level containing 'attitudes, beliefs and conductive practices' makes a useful

differentiation between values on the one hand, and their description in a more exact, but at a non-practical level on the other<sup>10</sup>.

In conclusion, it is possible to describe culture as a shared set of basic suppositions and values, with resultant conductive norms, attitudes and beliefs which demonstrate themselves in systems and institutions and also conductive models and non-conductive items<sup>11</sup>. There are various levels to culture, ranging from the easily observable outer layers (such as behavioral practices) to the ever increasingly harder to grasp inner layers (such as suppositions and values). Culture is shared among members of one group or community, and has an interpretative role for the members of that group. Culture is placed between the human nature on the one hand and the individual personality on the other<sup>12</sup>.

Culture is not inheritable or genetic, but culture is learned. Although all members of a group or community share their culture, expressions of culture-related conducts are changed and re-modified by the individuals' personality characteristics.

## National Borders, People and Individuals

There is an eye-catching argument about what level of analysis is desirable for the concept of 'culture' to be a workable implement. As culture is shared, it implies that it is not necessarily directly connected to the individual on the one hand, yet at the same time it is problem -some to establish how many individuals who share a 'culture' make up any one culture. In everyday language words like 'Arabic culture' suggest that countries as diverse as Bahrain, Yemen and Kuwait share a common culture<sup>13</sup>. Equally, the notion of 'European culture' can frequently be heard, again proposing that a large number of people share a common culture across political and language boundaries. At the other extreme, there are notions of small cultural units, probably more correctly referred to as sub-cultures, such as 'Asian-American culture' or 'Arabian culture'. It is so quite difficult to set a clear level of resolution which is justified by the description we have given above, as the definition arguably can be applied to both the larger as well as the smaller units referred to above<sup>14</sup>.

In more practical words, national borders have been the welcomed part of resolution, and therefore countries the welcomed part of analysis. There are also many good arguments for this:

Firstly, the nationality of a person could be easily developed, whereas membership of a sub-culture is more problematic to establish, especially in cases where individuals may suppose themselves members of various sub-cultures at the same time<sup>15</sup>. The use of nationality is therefore avoiding unnecessary duplication and puts aside ambiguity in the research process, as the nationality of a person can be usually identified easily.

Secondly, there is much significant support for the notion that people coming from one country will be shaped by largely the same values and norms as their co-patriots.

Simultaneously, it is significant to declare that culture is not the only agent affecting man conduct, i.e. that an individual belonging to a certain culture will be shaped by the culture, but is not a 'servant and slave to the culture'. Although public 'dimensions' of culture can be constructed at a culture-level, these may not necessarily be shown in the conduct of each individual from that culture. In other words, using data from one level of analysis (such as the culture level of analysis) at another level of analysis (the individual level) is inappropriate. This kind of error is marked an 'ecological mistake and shortcoming by Hophman. Culture level analysis always reflects "central tendencies (...) for the country", it does not foresee a person's conduct<sup>16</sup>.

### Probe into Cultural and Subcultural Models

Interest in other cultures is probably as old as the exposure of human tribes to other tribes, and therefore an exposure to 'foreignness'. However it was not until the late 1950s that a more structured approach was adopted from which a theory was derived as to how to classify cultural model<sup>16</sup>. In his review of the history of intercultural communication, Hart dates the beginning of intercultural communication in the year 1959, the year that Harris's "The Silent Language" was published.

**Basic cultural purports and models:** A number of mostly behavioral purports has been identified that can be used to distinguish between cultures. These include, for example, the differences in the usage of kinesics (body movements), proxemics (space organization), oculistics (eye movement), haptics (touching behavior) as well as paralinguistic purports, such as accents, intonation, speed of talking and so on. Not astonishingly each of these purports plays an important role in intercultural communication, particularly in communication where the context plays a significant part. Most people will either consciously, or subconsciously look for positive action (or reaction) by their counterparts when taking to them vis a vis, for instance to show that what is being mentioned is comprehended. In those cases the positive action is, astonishingly, often indirectly connected to cultural context. Failure to provide the correct positive action may well be described as weakening the spoken word. Depending on the context, this may lead to a complete communication collapse<sup>17</sup>.

For instance, eye contact is an important part of the communication process in European cultures. It is often seen as a positive action of what is said. However, maintaining eye contact is not usually acceptable in certain Asian cultures, where, for example, a woman can only maintain eye contact with her husband. Clearly a woman from such a culture will cause confusion, if not disbelief, when communicating with a Western speaker<sup>18</sup>.

Another frequently examined concept is "thought patterns". These can be shortened as being logical or pre-logic, inductive or deductive, abstract or concrete and alphabetic or analphabetic. These purports are more complex, and they may require more attention, as they are slightly more difficult to grasp. For instance, deductive or inductive thought patterns may have a deep effect on debate and intercommunication forms, but also on the way the world is seen and understood<sup>19</sup>. According to Maletzke Anglo-Saxon thought models are predominantly inductive, Latin American and Russian thought models are predominantly deductive. Whereas inductive thinking aims to derive theoretical purports from individual cases, deductive thinking aims to interpret individual cases within previously derived theoretical purports. Clearly, argumentation styles will be quite different in the two approaches. Equally, thinking within the Aristotelian logical tradition, which is dominant in most Western cultures may not be understood by people from a culture which emphasizes a more holistic approach to thinking.

Although all of the purports that have been suggested are interesting as a possible way to check differences in cultural patterns, they are hard to apply in the context of a wider study because of the drastic lack of quantitative data. It is thus necessary to look for classifications of cultural models at a deeper level than the conductive one (or the outer layer of the culture onion), as well as research that is supported by the accessibility of empirical data<sup>20</sup>. All of the purports and concepts referred to above are limited to only one angle out of the multi-dimensional differences that makes an effective research agenda into cultural differences. Even when taken together, they do not allow a broad analysis or classification of cultures to any great extent or depth. More systematic, deep and complicated purports and meaning, such as Harris and Hophman were asked to allow for a more detailed analysis of culture at a different level than only conductive.

**Harris's classic models:** Based on his experience in the Foreign Service, Edward T. Harris published two books, "The Silent Language" and "The Hidden Dimension". In them, he identified two classic dimensions of culture. Firstly, he identified high-context and low-context cultures, where the high and low context concept is primarily concerned with the way in which information is transmitted, that is to say communicated. According to Harris, all "information transaction" can be characterized as high-, low- or middle- context. "High context transactions feature pre-programmed information that is in the receiver and in the setting, with only minimal information in the transmitted message. Low context transactions are the reverse. Most of the information must be in the transmitted message in order to make up for what is missing in the context."

The high/low context concept remains one of the most frequently used purports when analyzing, for example, face-to-face communication. The implications of this concept are far ranging, and reaching from interpersonal to mass communication.

The high/low context concept is one of the easiest purports to witness in intercultural encounters. This concept deals primarily with language, which is located in the outer layer of the 'culture onion', and is one of the most rudimentary purports for any type of intercultural communication, or analysis thereof. For example, many business negotiators, particularly from the West, find it difficult to deal with Chinese business negotiators<sup>21</sup>. Often they have been found to encounter severe problems understanding their counterparts, and interpreting correctly what their counterparts want to convey.

Although clearly it is not only the high/low context concept that makes communication difficult, the high/low context concept may well play an important role in the difficulties encountered when a person from a high context country, such as China, communicates with a person from a low context country, such as Germany<sup>22</sup>.

Equally, mass communication is likely to be influenced by the high/low context concept. In particular, it can be expected that the information content of advertising, for example, is lower in high context cultures than low context cultures<sup>23</sup>.

However, there is little, if any, statistical data available which identify where given countries are located on the high-low context dimension, and linguistically, it is very complex to identify degrees of directness, since explicitness – implicitness, communicative strength, and bluntness-cushioning are all involved.

Harris's second concept, polychronic versus monochronic time orientation, deals with the ways in which cultures structure their time. Similar to the high/low context concept, this concept is easy to understand, but it lacks empirical data<sup>24</sup>. The monochronic time concept follows the notion of "one thing at a time", while the polychronic concept focuses on multiple tasks being handled at one time, and time is subordinate to interpersonal relations.

Although the concept of monochronic/polychronic time purports is very useful, and like the high/low context concept easily observed, the lack of empirical data makes the concept more difficult to apply in research. This is particularly true for research comparing cultures that are seen as relatively close<sup>25</sup>.

Both of Harris's purports are therefore extremely useful on the one side, yet very ambiguous on the other. The ambiguity makes it difficult to apply the purports within the framework of a more analytical approach, especially for comparing cultures that are seen as culturally close. The usefulness for broad based research is also limited by the limit of the purports to only one aspect of culturally based conduct, rather than a broad explanation of underlying values<sup>26</sup>.

**Hopman's cultural dimensions:** The lack of exactness, and the lack of a universally usable framework for classifying

cultural patterns, has been addressed by a number of researchers. The most famous and most often cited work in this area is the research by the Dutch organizational anthropologist Hopman. Hopman derived his culture dimensions from examining work-related values in employees of IBM during the 1970s. In his original work he divides culture into four dimensions at culture-level: power distance, individualism/pluralism, masculinity/femininity and uncertainty avoidance.

Power distance is defined as *"the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally"*.

The power distance concept is clearly more far-reaching than the work place alone. Power distance is often reflected in the hierarchical organization of corporation, the respect that is expected to be shown by the student towards her or his teacher, the political forms of decentralization and centralization, by the belief in community that inequalities among people should be minimized, or that they are expected and desired<sup>27</sup>.

The second dimension suggested by Hopman is Individualism/Pluralism. The concept is one of the most frequently discussed and researched purports. Hopman defines this dimension as: *"individualism pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family. Collectivism as its opposite pertains to societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty."*

This concept is the most popular among the Hopman dimensions. It is frequently cited in a variety of intercultural research, as Hopman points out, sometimes confusingly and confused with other dimensions. It may not be extremely surprising that this dimension is popular: It is the dimension that is most easily grasped and frequently encountered when looking at other cultural behavioral models.

Masculinity/femininity is an equally powerful, yet often understated, dimension. Hopman defines this dimension as follows: *"masculinity pertains to societies in which social gender roles are clearly distinct (i.e., 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); femininity pertains to societies in which social gender roles overlap (i.e., both men and women are supposed to be modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life)."*

Hopman points out that this dimension is often neglected. Maybe the controversial name given to this dimension has somewhat influenced the popularity of it. Equally, it appears often to be confused with Individualism/Collectivism.

Uncertainty avoidance is the final dimension present in Hophman's original work. Hophman defines uncertainty avoidance as *"the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by uncertain or unknown situations."*

This dimension is fairly easily understood, and can often be seen reflected in many negotiations. In his later work, Hophman introduces a fifth dimension. The long-term orientation dimension is the result of his co-operation with Michael Bond, who links this dimension to the work of Confucius. Hophman describes long-term orientation as characterized by perseverance ordering relationships by status and observing this order, thrift, and having a sense of shame, whereas short-term orientation is characterized by personal stability and stability, protecting your "face", respect for tradition and reciprocation of greetings, favors and gifts.

The work of Hophman is probably the most popular work in the arena of culture research. Although the work provides a relatively general framework for analysis, the framework can be used easily at many everyday intercultural interactions. It is especially helpful, as it cuts the complexities of culture and its interactions into five relatively easily comprehended cultural dimensions.

**Thompson and Hampden-Turner:** Thompson and Hampden-Turner classified cultures along a mix of behavioral and value models. Their research focuses on the cultural dimensions of business executives.

In their book "Riding The Waves of Culture" Thompson and Hampden-Turner identify seven value orientations. Some of these value orientations can be regarded as nearly identical to Hophman's dimensions. Others offer a somewhat different perspective.

The seven value dimensions identified were: i. Universalism versus particularism, ii. Communitarianism versus individualism, iii. Neutral versus emotional, iv. Defuse versus specific cultures, v. Achievement versus ascription, vi. Human-Time relationship and vii. Human-Nature relationship.

Of these seven value dimensions, two reflect closely the Hophman dimensions of Collectivism/Individualism and to a lesser extent power distance. Thompson and Hampden-Turner's communitarianism/individualism value orientation seems to be virtually identical to Hophman's Collectivism/Individualism. Their achievement/ascription value orientation, which describes how status is accorded, seems to be connected to Hophman's power distance index, at least if one accepts that status is accorded by nature rather than achievement, and that this reflects a greater willingness to accept power distances. It is, however, not a complete match, as Hophman's power index does not only relate to how status is accorded, but also to the acceptable power distance within a community, an area that is not touched upon by Thompson and Hampden-Turner.

Thompson and Hampden-Turner's other dimensions seem to focus more on some resulting effects of underlying value dimensions. For example, their neutral/emotional dimension describes the extent to which feelings are openly expressed, i.e. a behavioral aspect rather than a value in itself.

Their universalism/particularism value orientation, describing a preference for rules rather than trusting relationships, could be interpreted as part of Hophman's uncertainty avoidance dimension on the one side, and to some extent the collectivist/individualist dimension. Their diffuse/specific value orientation, describing the range of involvement, seems to have no direct link to any of Hophman's dimensions.

Human-Time relationship is closely related, if not identical, to Harris's polychronic and monochronic time perceptions. The Human-Nature relationship appears to be closely related to the Human-Nature relationship in Strodbeck and Kluckhohn's Value Orientations.

### **Hophman and Thompson and Hampden-Turner compared**

Hophman, as well as Thompson and Hampden-Turner, derive their data from questionnaires that were distributed among professionals – in the case of Hophman among employees of IBM, and in the case of Thompson & Hampden-Turner among a large number of executives from different organizations.

Hophman's work is based on a questionnaire originally designed to evaluate work values, and, not surprisingly, it is mostly focused towards that end. Thompson & Hampden-Turner's questionnaires on the other side asked respondents for preferred conduct in a number of both work and leisure situations. What both studies have in common is that in both questionnaires the focus is on the ultimate goal, and that the underlying values are extracted from a series of questions about more outer layers of the 'culture onion'.

This research gives both approaches a very practical wing. Yet at the same time, the concealed value claims are frequently the result of very little data, or are derived from a limited number of questions. This has at least the potential to disturb significantly the derived value predictions. It may also hide certain dimensions, or values may be wrongly derived because of certain condition influences on the respondents. Examples of this would include the meaning that Italy is, when looking at Hophman's data, an individualistic culture, or that French respondents show a preference for universalism in one answer in Thompson & Hampden-Turner's questionnaire and for particularism in all the other answers. Such unexpected findings clearly suggest the impression of condition variables or other potential problems in the application of the data derived.

**From conductive questions to values – Schwartz Value Inventory:** A different approach to finding (cultural) value

differences has been taken by Shalom Schwartz. Using his "SVI" (Schwartz Value Inventory), Schwartz did not ask for preferred outcomes, but asked respondents to assess 57 values as to how important they felt these values are as "guiding principles of one's life". Schwartz's work is separated into an individual-level analysis and a culture-level analysis, a major difference compared to the works of Hophman and Thompson and Hampden-Turner who sometimes fail to clearly distinguish between the two levels, although generally claim to work at the culture-level<sup>28</sup>.

Schwartz distinguishes between value types and value dimensions. Although this differentiation is similar to some of Hophman's work, it is more pronounced in Schwartz's work. A value type is generally a set of values that can conceptually be combined into one meaningful description, such as egalitarian commitment at the culture level. Values located in that value-type have other values that are placed at the opposite, or in the opposing value type. In the case of egalitarian commitment, this would be hierarchy at the culture-level. Together these two value types form the value dimension of 'egalitarian commitment versus hierarchy'. This is somewhat similar to, for example, individualism versus collectivism in Hophman's work, which combined form the individualism versus pluralism value dimension. However, as indicated before, the difference between value type and value dimension is more clearly worked out and pronounced in Schwartz's work<sup>29</sup>.

From data collected in 63 countries, with more than 60,000 individuals taking part, Schwartz derived a total of 10 distinct value types (power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, beneficence, tradition, congruity and security) at an individual-level analysis.

These individual level value types each represent a number of values which can be combined in a joint 'idea': Values located in the 'power' value type represent are likely to indicate an individual that values social status and prestige or control and dominance over people and resources. High scores in the 'achievement' value type would indicate a high priority given to personal success and admiration. 'Hedonism' represents a value type where preference is given to pleasure and self-gratification. 'Stimulation' represents a group of values that express a preference for an exciting life, and 'self-direction' a distinct group of values that value independence, creativity and freedom. The 'Universalism' value type on the other side represents a preference for social justice and patience, whereas the 'beneficence' value sphere includes values uplifting the welfare of others<sup>30</sup>. The 'Congruity' value type contains values that represent obedience and the 'tradition' value type is made up out of values representing a respect for traditions and customs. Lastly, the 'security' value type is a value orientation containing values relating to the safety, harmony and welfare of community and of one self<sup>31</sup>.

Viewed in a circular order, these ten types of values can be

ordered into four higher order value types: 'openness to change' combines stimulation, self-direction and a part of hedonism, 'self-enhancement', combines achievement and power as well as the remainder of hedonism<sup>32</sup>. On the opposite side of the circle, 'conservation' combines the value orientations of security, tradition and congruity - and self-transcendence, which combines universalism and beneficence. These four higher order value types form two bipolar conceptual dimensions. This type of order is derived from the location of values depending on their (negative) correlation within the circle - hence values situated on one side of the circle will be strongly negatively correlated with values on the opposing side of the circle, yet positively correlated with values located nearby. In practical terms, this means that a person who assigns high scores to values which are located in the 'security' value type is also likely to regard values located in the 'congruity' value type as 'guiding principles of his life' - and s/he will be unlikely to assign high scores to values placed in the 'provocation' or 'self-direction' value types<sup>33</sup>.

Similar to the value domains types at individual level, Schwartz also derives seven distinct value types when analyzing the values at a culture-level. The seven value types, which can be summarized in three value dimensions, extracted from this analysis are briefed below.

Conservatism is a value type that emphasizes the maintenance of traditional values and virtues or the traditional order. The value type is contradicted to two distinct independence value types, which are located at the opposite side of the 'value circle' that is produced by Schwartz's method of analysis. The two independence types both promote individual benefit, rather than group benefit. Intellectual independence as a value type puts emphasis on the perusal of intellectual ideas and directions, whereas the impressive independence value type places greater emphasis on enjoyable experiences<sup>34</sup>.

Schwartz's hierarchy value type emphasizes a congruous relationship with the environment, whereas this value type is opposed by mastery, which stresses on an active mastery of the (socio-cultural) condition.

Another value dimension can be found with a further two opposing value types: hierarchy versus egalitarianism. The hierarchy value type emphasizes an unequal contribution to power, whereas the egalitarian value kind has greater impression on equality and the uplifting of the welfare and wellbeing of others.

It is significant to note, that Schwartz' work represents a radical departure from the previously presented studies, in as far as the measurement instrument is radically different (values vs. preferred states or conduct). This may have two consequences: It does eradicate, at least potentially, the chance of situational variables having a strong impact on the respondents. On the other hand, it opens the debate that when asked about values

(rather than specific outcomes) respondents may be inclined to select a more utopian response, which in turn may not be reflected in their actual conduct.

## Conclusion

This paper has focused on two main aspects: The definition of culture – and a review of different approaches to research into cultural value dimensions. Firstly, a definition of culture was derived, identifying culture as “a unclear set of attitudes, beliefs, conductive norms, and basic suppositions and values that are shared by a community of people, and that affect each member’s conduct and his/her interpretation of the ‘purport’ and meaning of other people’s behavior” . The various levels of culture – from hidden values to tangible conduct- have been argued, and it has been shown that culture can be viewed as an onion-like construct, made up of different levels that each influences the higher levels.

A number of forms of dividing cultures have been provided in the second part of the paper. These ways range from single purports, such as the perception of time, to non-verbal behavior. This overview also presented more systematic approaches which focus on the underlying values that influence the more surface levels of culture. In this context, we have briefly discussed the work by Hophman and Thompson& Hampden-Turner, both of which derive their respective value dimensions from questioning preferred states or behaviors.

Finally, an alternative approach, based on the ranking of values rather than asking for preferred states or behaviors was also given out: Schwartz’s value types, which may give out a more reliable approach to classification of value dimensions.

Anyway, despite all endeavors there is no currently acknowledged ‘right’ concept of culture or cultural dimensions as yet. Also there is a remarkable argument on the validity and reliability of the data from which these purports were derived. For example, Victor,D.A argues the relative trust on Hophman’s dimensions in the business area. In his view, data is necessarily out of date, as it was collected more than thirty years before. On the other side, other research suggests eye-catching stability in values and mores.

More research in this field may be needed to fill in the gaps and provide more empirical data than is currently available, as well as update the currently available data sets.

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