Chapter XXVI
Hofstede's Dimensions of National Culture in IS Research[*]

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter, the authors do a citation analysis on Hofstede's Culture's Consequences in IS research to re-examine how IS research has used Hofstede's national culture dimensions. They give a brief history of Hofstede's research, and review Hofstede's cultural dimensions and the measurement of them. The authors then present the results from their original citation analysis (which included years 1994-1999) from Ford, Connelly and Meister (2003) and their follow-up citation analysis (years 2000-2005). The authors examine the extent to which Hofstede's national culture dimensions inform IS research, what areas of IS research have used them, and what changes have occurred since the original citation analysis. They then discuss the implications for IS research.

INTRODUCTION

Globalization continues to challenge organizations by restructuring organizational boundaries, increasing competition, and creating new manage- rial concerns, ranging from having employees in different countries, to the structure of international alliances. Globalization is important for IS practitioners and researchers, because national differences may affect the use, implementation,

structure, and characteristics of information systems in many international settings (Abdul-Gader, 1997; Day, Dosa, & Jorgensen, 1995; Dustbar & Hofstede, 1999; Ferratt & Vlahos, 1998; M. Martinsons, 1991). Factors such as a country's infrastructure (e.g., the preponderance of wireless technology in South Korea, versus a heavier reliance on fiber-optic technologies in North America), the political and economic situations (e.g., a factor in the Digital Divide, Cronin, 2002), and the physical environment (e.g., in some parts of Africa where the temperature can become so high that computers simply will not work in the environment, De Vreede, Jones, & Mgaya, 1998-99), and cultural dynamics (e.g., norms, values, and languages) have been shown to be relevant. These studies, among others, have led to several calls for more research to integrate the IS and national culture domains (Gallupe & Tan, 1999; Nelson & Clark Jr., 1994; R.T. Watson, Ho, & Raman, 1994).

National culture has a rich research tradition. While there are several competing conceptualizations of national culture, Hofstede's dimensions of national culture are very commonly used. These dimensions allow national-level analysis, and are standardized to allow multiple country comparisons. Furthermore, Hofstede's dimensions have often been employed by researchers when "international" or "national culture" issues are discussed within IS. However, it is not clear whether the IS field been able to build strong theory and generalizable managerial practices from this framework.

In 2003, we examined how IS researchers have used Hofstede's cultural dimensions. We analyzed the impact of Hofstede's work, based on a citation analysis of the IS literature up to 1999 (see Ford, Connelly, & Meister, 2003). At that point in time, we concluded that the IS literature did not strongly integrate Hofstede's work. Many papers cited Hofstede incidentally as they mentioned national culture, many more adopted the dimension scores without considering regional or organizational

impacts on the dimension scores. Finally, very few papers contributed to the broader literature on the conceptualization or effects of national culture. Generally, it appeared that much work remained to be done.

In this chapter we re-examine how Hofstede's work has contributed to IS research. As with our original paper, it should be noted that it is not our contention that Hofstede's measure and national culture dimensions are the best approach to study issues relating to national culture. Rather, it is the purpose of this chapter to understand how Hofstede's national culture dimensions have added value to IS research, and what role these dimensions should play in future IS research. Our focus in this chapter is primarily on the body of IS research that has been published since our last analysis.

This chapter begins by reviewing the cultural dimensions proposed by Hofstede. The results of the citation analysis are presented next; the citations are classified according to the IS classification schema developed by Barki, Rivard and Talbot (1993) and classified according to the extent of their integration of Hofstede's national culture dimensions and IS research. The paper then identifies the degree to which IS research has been informed by this research. Summaries of major findings as well as opportunities and approaches for future research, which will encourage a more cumulative tradition in this area, will also be discussed.

HOFSTEDE'S CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

Hofstede (1980a) pioneered the construct of "national culture". His argument was that in order to be able to act together, people must understand and be aware of the differences between cultures. He defined culture as "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another" (p. 25). Members

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