

## CHAPTER

# 3

## Contrasting Cultural Values

### OBJECTIVES

#### Upon completion of this chapter, you will

- appreciate the role that values play in communicating effectively with persons from other cultures.
- understand differences in word meanings among cultures.
- learn how attribution and perception play a role in cultural values.
- appreciate attitude differences toward men and women in various cultures.
- understand how attitudes toward work and ethics vary with the culture.
- learn how religious influences impact cultural values.
- understand how individualism and collectivism play a role in cultural values.

### VALUES

Values form the core of a culture. **Values** are social principles, goals, or standards accepted by persons in a culture. They establish what is proper and improper behavior as well as what is normal and abnormal behavior. Values are learned by contacts with family members, teachers, and religious leaders. What people hear, read, and watch on television influences their value systems.

People in various cultures have different attitudes toward women, ethical standards, and work. Semantic differences and attributions affect cultural values as do religious influences. Because the U.S. workplace is becoming increasingly diverse culturally, managers need to be aware of the values of all workers. Managers are more likely to understand what motivates

people of different cultures and to deal effectively with problem situations if they understand the cultural background of the person.

Some values held by people in the United States are not shared by people in other cultures. In his book *American Ways*, Althen (2003) identifies a number of U.S. values and assumptions, including equality, informality, individualism, directness, and attitude toward the future, time, and work.

People in the United States may claim that all persons are equal and that no person is superior to another simply because of wealth, education, or social status. In reality, subtle distinctions are made within a group to acknowledge status differences, many of which are nonverbal. Because of this belief in equality, U.S. Americans are uncomfortable with certain displays of respect, such as bowing, that are common in some cultures. Although inequalities do exist, many women hold positions of power and influence in education, government, and industry.

People in the United States also are rather informal when compared to people of other cultures. They often dress more casually. In fact, it is not unusual to see the president of the United States dressed in casual attire. The posture of U.S. people is often informal; assuming a slouched stance or putting feet on a desk or chair is not uncommon. The speech of U.S. people is also rather informal; they often address people they hardly know by their first names.

Another quality that people in the United States value is directness. They prefer that people be open and get to the point. Such sayings as “What is the bottom line?” and “Put your cards on the table” illustrate the importance placed on directness in the United States. In some cultures, such as those found in Asia, people do not value directness. They will not reveal their emotions using the same nonverbal cues as Westerners; therefore, people in the United States have difficulty reading Asian body language (the reverse is also true). U.S. Americans generally believe that honesty and truthfulness are important unless the truth would hurt a person’s feelings or unless they do not know the person well enough to be candid. They are less concerned with saving face than are people in Asia.

People in the United States value time; they study time-management principles to learn how to get more work done in a day. They are concerned with punctuality for work and appointments, and they study ways of working more efficiently. The success of the fast-food industry in the United States is directly related to eating on the run rather than wasting time lingering over meals. In other parts of the world, mealtime is very leisurely. In many South American countries, businesses close for two hours in the middle of the day for a long meal and a *siesta* (rest), but people often work into the evening.

The importance of time to different cultures is directly related to religious dogma. The Puritans who came to the United States were more concerned with wasting time and with planning for the future than about the past or present. Native Americans, African Americans, Latin Americans, and Asians, however, come from a different combination of religious biases and cultural differences and are occupied with the past and present. One of the reasons Deming’s theory of management was adopted in Japan before it was adopted in the United States was the amount of time it takes to formulate group decisions as opposed to individual decisions. The Japanese have always been team oriented; therefore, it was easier for Deming to sell them on his theories.

People in the United States do not place as great an emphasis on history as do people of many other cultures; they look to the future and consider change to be desirable, particularly if

they are Christians. In the Asian, Arabic, and Latin cultures, the past is revered. Their future is determined by fate or, in some religions, by the Almighty. People of the Islamic faith believe that if they work hard and pray, everything will be as Allah desires. They simply try to live in harmony with whatever changes occur, rather than seeking change, as is true in the U.S. culture. Table 3-1 contains contrasts of the priority of cultural leadership theories (CLT) of the different cluster groups in the House (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004, p. 682) study.

**TABLE 3-1 Ranking of Societal Clusters Using Absolute CLT Scores**

<b>Charismatic/ Value Based</b>	<b>Team Oriented</b>	<b>Participative</b>	<b>Humane Oriented</b>	<b>Autonomous</b>	<b>Self- Protective</b>
<i>Higher</i>	<i>Higher</i>	<i>Higher</i>	<i>Higher</i>	<i>Higher</i>	<i>Higher</i>
Anglo L. America Southern Asia Germanic E. Nordic E.	L. America	Germanic E. Nordic E. Anglo	Southern Asia Sub-Sahara Arabs Anglo	E. Europe Germanic E. Confucian A. Southern Asia Nordic E. Anglo Middle East L. Europe Sub-Sahara Arabs L. America	Southern Asia Middle East Confucian A. E. Europe
Sub-Sahara Arabs L. Europe E. Europe Confucian A.	E. Europe Southern Asia Nordic E. Anglo Sub-Sahara Arabs Germanic E. Confucian A.	L. America L. Europe Sub-Sahara Arabs	Confucian A. L. America Middle East E. Europe Germanic E.		L. America Sub-Sahara Arabs L. Europe
Middle East	Middle East	E. Europe Southern Asia Confucian A. Middle East	L. Europe Nordic E.		Anglo Germanic E. Nordic E.
<i>Lower</i>	<i>Lower</i>	<i>Lower</i>	<i>Lower</i>	<i>Lower</i>	<i>Lower</i>
<b>Charismatic/ Value Based</b>	<b>Team Oriented</b>	<b>Participative</b>	<b>Humane Oriented</b>	<b>Autonomous</b>	<b>Self- Protective</b>

A study of the chart reveals that while a culture may have some leadership characteristics that they share with another culture, no two cultures rank the leadership characteristics the same way.

## SEMANTIC DIFFERENCES

**Semantics** is the study of the meaning of words; it involves the way behavior is influenced by the use of words and nonverbal methods to communicate.

Words in the English language often have multiple meanings, some of which are contradictory. The word *sanction*, for example, may mean either to restrict a particular activity or to authorize it. Semantic differences are compounded when interacting with people of other cultures. Even when both speak the same language, a word may have a different meaning and implication in another culture.

Although England and Australia are English-speaking countries, words are often used in a different way in these countries from the way they are used in the United States. The word *homely*, for example, means “plain” in the United States although in England, it means friendly, warm, and comfortable. To the English, a sharp person is one who is devious and lacking in principles rather than one who is quick, smart, and clever, which is its meaning in the United States. The expression “quite good” has a different meaning to the English than to U.S. Americans. While the English interpretation is “less than good,” the U.S. meaning is “very good.” Australian English also holds some surprises for people in the United States. In Australia you would hear such terms as *bloke* for “man,” *lollies* for “candy,” and *sandshoes* for “sneakers.”

A misunderstanding over the meaning of one word during an important meeting in World War II caused an argument between U.S. Americans and the British. The problem was caused by the British interpretation of the phrase “to table an item,” which to them means to bring up the item for immediate consideration. The U.S. interpretation, on the other hand, was to shelve or postpone the subject. (Axtell, 1994)

Language problems are compounded when conducting business with people in non-English-speaking countries. Differences in the meanings of words are often lost in translation. Sometimes a word has no real counterpart in the other language, and the translator must select a word that he or she believes is similar to the meaning intended.

Semantic differences can be seen in the meaning of the word “stop” in the United States and in South America. A U.S. American while traveling in Bolivia observed that drivers rarely stopped at the red octagonal sign with the word *alto*, the Spanish word for “stop.” A local Bolivian explained that in this country, the stop sign is more a recommendation than a traffic law.

Brand names for U.S. products have caused problems when translated into another language. For example, the Spanish translation of Ford Motor Company’s *Fiera* truck means “ugly old woman,” not a very flattering name for a vehicle. U.S. firms have had to exercise greater care when introducing products in non-English-speaking countries because of marketing errors made in the past when product names and slogans were translated into another language (Axtell, 1994).

When conversing with people of other cultures, be sure your meaning is clear by avoiding slang, contractions, and idioms; by paraphrasing what the other person has said; and by speaking slowly and distinctly.

## ATTRIBUTION AND PERCEPTION

**Attribution**, or the ability to look at social behavior from another culture's view, can cause communication problems because known experiences from your own culture are used in explaining unknown behaviors of those in another culture. **Perception**, the learned meaning of sensory images, may involve learning a new reaction to an old learned stimulus.

Dunkin' Donuts discontinued an ad featuring Rachael Ray, a celebrity on the Food Network, when it received complaints that the fringed black-and-white scarf Ms. Ray was wearing could be viewed as support for Muslim extremists and terrorists (Fox News, 2008).

To lessen anxiety when communicating with someone of an unfamiliar culture, reducing uncertainty and increasing predictability about your own and the other person's behavior are important. The **uncertainty-reduction theory**, according to Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey (1988), "involves the creation of proactive predictions and retroactive explanations about our own and others' behavior, beliefs, and attitudes" (p. 22). People who have high uncertainty avoidance prefer to specialize, avoid conflict, want clear instructions, and do not want competition. Some ways to reduce uncertainty about other people include observing them, trying to get information about them, and interacting with them.

Uncertainty avoidance can be used to determine whether people who have different convictions can be personal friends. People from countries with weak uncertainty avoidance are more likely to remain close friends in spite of differing opinions, although those in countries with strong uncertainty avoidance are less likely to remain friendly following open disagreements. Some key differences between weak and strong uncertainty avoidance societies in the workplace are noted in Table 3-2 (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005).

**TABLE 3-2** Uncertainty Avoidance

Weak Uncertainty Avoidance	Strong Uncertainty Avoidance
Shorter employment time with employers	Longer employment time with employers
Few rules expected	Emotional need for rules
Tolerance for ambiguity	Need for precision and formalization
Top managers concerned with strategy	Top managers concerned with daily operations
Focus on decision process	Focus on decision content
Better at invention, worse at implementation	Worse at invention, better at implementation

Source: Based on chart in *Cultures and Organizations* (p. 189) by G. Hofstede & G. J. Hofstede, 2005, London: McGraw-Hill Book Company.

**Attribution training** involves making people aware of their own cultural context and how it differs from the cultural context of the country to which they will travel. Measuring employees' attribution confidence and then training them to be cognizant of their personal differences with the assignment culture is often used to prepare employees for overseas assignments. Employees are given scenarios that summarize problems they may encounter while living in another country. Participants are then asked to select the one response considered correct from the viewpoint of the

native of the country being studied. With feedback from the trainer and exposure to numerous situations, participants are better able to understand cultural variations in behavior and look at the situation from the other culture's viewpoint.

## ATTITUDES TOWARD WOMEN

**Attitudes** are our likes (or affinities) and dislikes (or aversions) to certain people, objects, or situations. Attitudes are rooted in our behavior and in our emotions (Weaver, 1998). Sometimes our personal attitudes may differ from those of the macroculture or dominant culture. For example, a U.S. American male may have the attitude that women belong in the home and not in the workplace. The attitude of the macroculture, however, is that women may choose to work or to stay home and take care of the family.

A society's attitudes toward women are influenced by cultural roots. In some cultures, such as the United States, women are supposed to have the same rights as men. In other countries, such as Libya and Kenya, women are considered subordinate to men. In fundamental Islamic cultures, women are allowed to work only with other women.

Although according to the Qur'an women must give consent to their marriage, are given inheritance, and have equal religious rights and responsibilities with men, Qur'an verses also depict men as superior to women. However, Muslim women cover themselves for protection from those who might hurt them. The Muslim proverb demonstrates this: "A woman is like a jewel: You don't expose it to thieves." Most women of Islamic faith embrace their religious traditions just as women of other faiths embrace theirs (Samovar, Porter, & McDaniel, 2007, p. 95).

This attitude toward a woman's role in society is carried into the workplace. In the United States, gender differences in the workplace are deemphasized. The women's rights movement has worked for such legislation as fair employment laws requiring that men and women must be given equal pay for equal work. Even though differences in pay still exist, treating men and women equally is expected in U.S. firms. The acceptance of women at higher levels is evidenced by the appointments of Sandra Day O'Connor and Ruth Bader Ginsburg to the U.S. Supreme Court and Condoleezza Rice as U.S. Secretary of State. The number of women appointees to top national- and state-level positions continues to increase. In large corporations, the number of women executives is also on the increase. Women-owned businesses are making a significant contribution. In fact, in 2006 there were 7.7 million businesses owned by women in the United States generating \$1.1 trillion in annual sales and employing 7.2 million people (National Numbers, 2006). Women in the United States own 10.73% of the businesses compared to 18.45% that are owned by men (Allen, Elam, Langowitz, & Dean, 2007).

Women in the United States earn 77 cents for every dollar men make, which is much better than the 59 cents to the dollar that women earned in the 1960s. The largest differences are for women with college degrees (Bravo, 2008). Compared to this U.S. trend, women in France own 3.16% of the businesses compared to 6.66% owned by men; in the United Kingdom 6.15% of females own businesses compared to 15% owned by men; and in Thailand 45.42% of businesses are owned by women compared to 51% that are owned by men. What is interesting is that the gender difference is more pronounced in high-income countries. Europe and low/middle income Asian countries show the largest gaps with Latin American and Caribbean low/middle-income countries showing the largest business ownership by women. However, women entrepreneurs in high-income countries have more education than those in low/middle-income countries (Allen et al., 2007).

According to Axtell, Briggs, Corcoran, and Lamb (1997), attitudes toward women changed greatly during the 1990s. More companies, such as American Airlines, DuPont, and Procter & Gamble, were hiring women. More women are earning business undergraduate degrees and M.B.A.s than ever before. In certain situations, it has been found that women give a company a competitive advantage. Many times the largest hurdles for women are the misperceptions and sexist attitudes of managers in the United States rather than barriers in international business.

Barbara Fischer, an international attorney from Minneapolis, says, “American women have an advantage over American men doing business in Japan. Japanese men’s style of communicating—indirect, hesitant, ambiguous speech—is the way women have been socialized. It’s what we in the United States had to unlearn, the being deferential and patient.” (Axtell et al., 1997, p. 141)

Recent studies have found that women adapt better than men in intercultural situations (Halsberger, 2007). Women manage adversity better and are often given “glass cliff” assignments that have a greater risk of failure and criticism than men (Ryan & Haslam, 2007). One problem for men and women are couples who have dual careers. Companies are beginning to recognize the special problems these couples face and are trying to give support to the spouse as well as to the employee in international assignments (Altman & Shortland, 2008).

Following the collapse of communism and the rise of the Pacific Rim, a New World order is emerging with a larger number of countries following the democratic system of government. With democracy come increased opportunities, especially for women and especially in government and politics.

In a study of 7,200 businesses worldwide, the percentage of women in senior management positions has grown from 19% in 2004 to 22% in 2007. In the United States, women hold top management positions in 23% of the businesses surveyed; Australia, 22%; France, 21%; Germany, 12%; the United Kingdom, 19%; China, 32%; Philippines, 50%; Hong Kong, 35%; the Russian Federation, 34%; South Africa, 29%; Sweden, 22%; Mexico, 20%; India, 14%; and Japan, 7% (“Businesses,” 2007). U.S. women in international assignments comprised 13% to 14% of the employees on international assignment in 1998 (Varma, Stroh, & Schmitt, 2001).

In many countries of the world, women are just beginning to be accepted at managerial levels. Progress in the advancement of women is slow in the Middle East. In such countries as Saudi Arabia, the Islamic belief in the subordination of women has impeded the progress of working women. Women in Mexican businesses are respected, but they are expected to compete on an equal footing with men and prove their competence. Although Mexican businesses have historically been male dominated, this seems to be changing as many Mexican businesswomen are now enjoying success at managerial levels.

With mounting global competitiveness, companies need to examine their current attitudes and practices toward women to ensure that they are making maximum use of their resources and that selection and promotion decisions are based solely on qualifications rather than along gender lines. Fortunately, people in many other countries, including those where women are not treated as equals, are beginning to change their sexist attitudes and are less concerned with gender than performance.

Although some women in various countries may have received their first job opportunities from family or political connections, others advanced because of professional qualifications and



job competence. Major problems that women in the workforce have faced, such as childcare and trying to combine a career and family, are common to all cultures. As more women are successful in managing multiple priorities and demands on their time and as they demonstrate that they are equally effective in high positions in business and politics, it will be easier for women in all cultures to advance to positions of prestige, importance, and responsibility. The following quote by the late mayor of Ottawa expresses the view held by many women in the workplace.

Whatever women do, they must do twice as well as men to be thought half as good. Luckily, that is not difficult (Charlotte Whitton).

## WORK ATTITUDES

Attitudes toward work are culturally diverse. The term **work attitudes** refers to how people of a culture view work. **Work**, defined as mental or physical activities directed to socially productive accomplishments, in some societies is associated with economic values, status and class, and cultural values.

People in the United States value work and tend to subscribe to the **work ethic**, which means that hard work is applauded and rewarded although failure to work is viewed negatively and with disdain. U.S. Americans admire people who work hard and are motivated to achieve; they have an aversion to idleness and prefer people of action to people of ideas. This concept of the United States as a work-ethic society is sometimes referred to as the “Protestant ethic,” which suggests that a person’s work (or “calling”) comes from God and that people demonstrate their worth to the Almighty and to themselves through their work. Proverbs such as “Blessed is he who has found his work” and “Satan finds mischief for idle hands” express the idea that in the United States, work is virtuous as well as respectable (Ferraro, 2001). Reward systems in many firms are based on an employee’s achievement and willingness to work beyond a 40-hour week. U.S. senior-level executives often work 56 hours a week, far more than in many European countries. They take only 14 days of vacation a year, far fewer than in some countries in Europe, where people often close businesses for a month to go on vacation (Utroska, 1992). According to the International Labor Organization (ILO, 2007), the average number of hours worked per week, per person for select countries is shown in Table 3-3.

**TABLE 3-3 Working Hours per Week by Country (2007)**

Country	Hours (avg.)	Country	Hours (avg.)
Singapore	50.5	United States	42.8
China	47.1	Switzerland	41.2
India	46.9	The Netherlands	38.5
South Korea	46.0	Germany	37.9
Mexico	44.7	New Zealand	37.8
Japan	43.5	France	36.2



This attitude toward work and responsibility to a job is ingrained from an early age in the United States. Parents teach their children about the American free enterprise system, which is based on the premise that you are the master of your own destiny, that you can be anything you want to be if you are willing to try hard enough, and that you will be rewarded for hard work. In contrast, people in the Islamic countries place great importance on the will of Allah and believe that planning for the future would conflict with religious beliefs.

To people in the United States, the job is almost an identification badge. A person's personal identity is associated with his or her occupation. Evidence of this identification with the job is shown when making introductions. People tend to include the person's occupation or job title along with the name; for example, "I'd like to present Betty Freeman, owner of the Health Hut" or "This is Jay Hunt, president of Southern Express." Success is not only measured by the job title but by the perception of what one earns; the implication is that the high income has probably resulted from the person's willingness to work 12- and 14-hour days, seven days a week.

People in the United States are action oriented; they are often unable to relax because they feel guilty doing nothing. People from other cultures have observed that U.S. Americans even work at relaxing. Television commercials in the United States often depict an activity as leisure—activities that persons in other cultures would consider manual labor such as gardening or washing the car. When they do take vacations, U.S. Americans are inclined to plan what they will do and where they will go so that the entire time is scheduled. Even those who participate in sports for recreation seem to try to make work out of it (Althen, 2003).

A graduate student from India recounted his first experience at being invited to the home of a U.S. graduate student. When he arrived, his U.S. friend invited him into the house, where he was dressing his son while his wife was sweeping the patio. His friend then asked him to help with grilling the chicken outdoors. As the Indian student narrated the story in his intercultural communication class, he expressed surprise that his friend and his wife did all their own work. In his country, he had never swept a floor, cooked a meal, or dressed his children.

Unlike people in a number of countries, many people in the United States consider spending hours visiting a waste of time and may excuse themselves from a group because they say they need to get back to work. People in other countries view with both amazement and amusement this apparent obsession with work.

In much of Europe, attitudes toward work seem to be more relaxed. Many businesses close during the month of August when people go on vacation. Most Europeans do not work on weekends or holidays, as they believe this is time that should be spent with family or engaging in personal activities. The French, in particular, value their vacation time and prefer not to work overtime. They enjoy the longest vacations of any country in the world; French law dictates that employees receive a minimum of five weeks of vacation a year. German companies appear to be moving in this direction as well. Despite the extended free time, people of both France and Germany are very productive when they work. Australians, too, value free time; they say they work to get a vacation. Australians have the shortest working hours of any country in the world, and they enjoy taking frequent breaks throughout the day.

Although many people of the United States receive a two- or three-week vacation, the individual vacation time periods are staggered so that businesses will not be closed for an extended period. Upper-level management workers often do not take all their vacation time each

year. Because of these attitudes toward work, the culture of the United States is referred to as a “live to work” culture in contrast to the cultures in countries such as Mexico that are “work to live” cultures.

The attitude of Japanese men toward work is very group oriented, and it plays a major role in their lives. They work Monday through Friday; 18-hour days are not unusual. Because of the long hours, relaxation does not include working around the house. Instead, they relax by watching television, playing computer games, browsing the Internet, drinking, or joining their friends at the local bar. However, this attitude appears to be changing as they become more Westernized.

A study in Mexico of Mexican expatriate managers found that they could motivate the workforce through building community and allowing collective control versus paternalistic control to dictate the way the facility operated. They found that most problems were caused by intercultural misunderstandings (stereotypes) rather than by local cultural issues (Litrico, 2007).

## ATTITUDES TOWARD ETHICS

**Ethical standards** are guidelines established to convey what is perceived to be correct or incorrect behavior by most people in a society. According to Ferrell and Gardiner (1991), ethical conduct “is something judged as proper or acceptable based on some standard of right and wrong” (p. 2). According to Borden (1991), being ethical means keeping your values in balance; if you compromise your values, you are being unethical. What it comes down to, according to Rabbi Dosick (2000), is that you have to determine what is right and what is wrong. Although there are sometimes penalties for doing both right and wrong, you have to be able to live with yourself and sleep at night.

Truth, according to U.S. beliefs, is an important aspect of ethical behavior. People in the United States have been taught from childhood to always tell the truth. Some parents even tell their children, “If you’ll just tell me the truth, I won’t punish you.” Therefore, as adults, U.S. persons subscribe to the saying, “Always tell the truth; let your word be your bond, and let your honor be your word” (Dosick, 2000, p. 19).

When Abraham Lincoln was a young boy, he was a clerk in a small dry-goods store. One day, after realizing that he had overcharged a customer, he walked two miles through the snow to return the overcharge of one penny (Dosick, 2000).

Personal ethics or moral standards may differ from societal ethics. Your own standards of what is right and wrong may be more stringent than those of your society as a whole. Problems may occur when the reverse is true, that is, when your ethical standards are lower than those considered acceptable by society. Of course, your ethical standards must meet the minimum level of behavior identified by law as acceptable. It has been found that peer reporting of unethical behavior is affected by cultural attitudes and styles of communication. Cultural unfamiliarity affects the communication of seen unethical behaviors. Culturally diverse encounters have revealed different patterns of expression, modes of behavior, value sets, attitudes, and styles of communication within the same nation. Cultural diversity includes race, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, socioeconomic backgrounds, and such. Some of the culturally diverse issues are personal, some are group, and some are corporate. Personal issues include prejudice, stereotyping, personality, values, and identity. Group issues include ethnocentrism and intergroup

member conflicts, and corporate issues include acculturation, structural, informal integration, and institutional bias. It is important to understand that many levels of ethical differences exist; thus, a determination of what constitutes unethical behavior should take into consideration the cultural standards involved (King, 2000).

Although many U.S. Americans are inclined to believe that their standards of business ethics are shared by other countries, in reality, standards of business ethics are not universal. For example, the Islamic standard of ethics is based on participating in religious ceremonies, adhering to codes of sexual behavior, and honoring one's parents. This definition or interpretation of ethical standards is not shared by U.S. Americans. Another dimension of business ethics relates to what is commonly referred to as using "backdoor connections" for conducting business; using such connections is common, for example, in South Africa and Nigeria as well as in the People's Republic of China. In fact, the Chinese use informal relationships in allocating resources and making decisions. Another ethical problem U.S. firms face when conducting business abroad is the unorthodox accounting and taxation practices used in some countries. In such countries as Brazil and Spain, keeping three sets of accounting books as a means of avoiding taxes is common. These practices violate not only the ethical standards of U.S. businesspeople but also the U.S. law. Another ethical problem encountered by U.S. firms doing business in other countries is the nonsanctity of legal contracts. To U.S. businesspersons, "a card laid is a card played." To Chinese, Koreans, and Japanese, who emphasize long-term relationships, renegotiation is common. As a result, U.S. businesspersons are never sure when they have a final agreement. People of the United States also question the ethicality of certain activities such as taking a potential customer on a yachting trip or a weekend gambling outing, clearly intended to influence buying decisions (Engholm & Rowland, 1996). An increased concern for ethics has been seen in the United States because of blatant misconduct of persons in government and industry. Religious leaders have been convicted of fraud and Wall Street moguls found guilty of insider trading. An increase in ethical training is taking place in schools so that the next generation will be better prepared to make appropriate decisions involving ethical behavior.

Ethical standards should be addressed when conducting business with persons of other cultures, especially those whose standards of ethical behavior differ markedly from our own. Even though we carry our frame of reference and value system with us when conducting business internationally, we should also be aware that our values may differ from those of other countries. For example, in the United States, bribery and graft are illegal. In some of the Latin American countries, however, using gifts to assure success in sealing an agreement is an accepted way of conducting business. (Bribery is discussed in more detail in chapters 9 and 12.)

Religion also affects ethics. All religions are against murder, robbery, lying, and adultery. All religions also stress humility, charity, and veracity (Samovar et al., 2007). With these similar ethical principles, religion should be more of a unifying principle than a dividing one. However, religion is truly a way of life for many people in the world.

## RELIGIOUS INFLUENCES

Religious influences have an impact on when and how business is conducted in international settings. In some cultures, such as those of North and South America, Australia, and Europe, lifestyle and religion are separate. In much of northern Africa and southern Asia, no distinction is made between lifestyle and religion because religion is a lifestyle. Businesspersons in these countries may seek the advice of religious leaders on business matters.

The United States has never had an official state church; religious observances rarely interfere with business. Although business is not conducted on such religious holidays as Christmas, no one feels obligated to participate in religious ceremonies or observe religious customs. Religion is a personal matter in the United States. Members of one family often hold different beliefs and belong to different denominations.

The United States subscribes to the doctrine of “separation of church and state.” According to this doctrine, the government does not lend official support to any particular religion and may not interfere with a person’s practicing any religion. A total of 90% of the population say they are religious. About 24% of the population is Roman Catholic; 52% is Protestant. Other Christian denominations make up about 5% of the total, while non-Christian groups also have substantial numbers in the United States (*CultureGrams*, 2008).

Some countries have officially recognized religions and participate in religious rituals that would affect business encounters. In Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Iran, and Iraq, for example, Islam is the official religion. Muslims observe the ritual of stopping work five times a day to pray. Meetings with people in Islamic countries should be sufficiently flexible to allow for this daily ritual, which is a way of life for Muslims. Conducting business during the month of Ramadan (which varies from year to year) is not recommended because Muslims are required to fast from dawn to sunset. Because of the impact of religion on all aspects of life in Islamic countries, businesspeople should learn about religious rituals and beliefs prior to conducting business there. The majority of Chinese people practice a combination of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism (Jandt, 2006).

A newly admitted patient became agitated about the arrangement of his hospital room. He kept saying that his bed should be on the opposite wall. The nurse explained that this would be impossible because the oxygen and other needed equipment had been installed on this side of the room and the wires were not long enough to reach the other side. When the nurse learned that the patient was Muslim and needed to face the east toward Mecca to say his prayers five times a day, she arranged for him to be moved to another room that met his needs. (Dresser, 2005)

Fasting for the month of Ramadan means not eating anything—no gum, no water, not even medicine—although you are not asked to fast if you are sick. The virtue of fasting is that you feel what it is like to be hungry so you can empathize with the poor. In addition, you are not to hurt anyone during fasting; you are to be tolerant. If you hurt someone, then you have broken one of the pillars of fasting. Islam is about peace, not violence (Hammouri, 2008).

When working with people in countries that practice nonliterate religions (those that lack written precepts), an understanding of the logic of their beliefs is important. Some Native Hawaiians, for example, believe in curses and spirits; this belief should be accommodated. Witchcraft is practiced in such countries as Zaire; conducting business with people of these cultures may involve changing the sales and marketing techniques that you would ordinarily use.

Religious beliefs and practices affect business in many countries. Although both the United States and Italy are primarily Christian countries, religious holidays are more numerous in Italy than in the United States. Sri Lanka, for example, has 27 holidays. Religious beliefs also affect consumption patterns; for example, Hindus do not eat beef, and Muslims and Orthodox Jews do not eat pork. When conducting business internationally, religion must be considered.

Worldwide there are 1.3 billion Muslims: 270 million in Arab nations, 400 million in the rest of the Middle East, and 6 million in the United States, not including the Nation of Islam (excluded because they do not follow the five pillars) (Shabass, 2004). In many countries where Islam is practiced, it controls life, with all other parts of life taking a secondary role. Religion answers many questions for people such as what is life and death, how was the universe created, how did our society originate, how do we relate as individuals and members of a society, and what is our relationship to nature? Religion in many cases is the psychological welfare for individuals, helping them to understand what cannot be easily explained. Religion is responsible for many of the contrasting cultural values between people (Samovar et al., 2007).

## INDIVIDUALISM AND COLLECTIVISM

**Individualism** refers to the attitude of valuing ourselves as separate individuals with responsibility for our own destinies and our own actions. Proponents of individualism believe that self-interest is an appropriate goal. **Collectivism** emphasizes common interests, conformity, cooperation, and interdependence (see Figure 3-1). Individualism and collectivism are the opposite ends of a continuum. Thus, we have to remember that some societies have factors near each end plus factors from the middle. It is impossible to put a society or an individual from a given society at one end of the continuum or the other because most people have attitudes that are associated with both ends of the continuum.

Cultural values, whether they are of our culture or any other culture, are learned through shared activities or cultural practices and shared meanings or cultural interpretation. Because these components are cumulative, both within and between people in a culture, people who belong to a particular culture know how others will act. As people develop their values within a culture, they go through three tasks: relationship formation, knowledge acquisition, and autonomy/relatedness. Cultural learning evolves over a lifetime, over historical time, and over evolutionary time. The environment we are in, what society tells us is valued, and the values we develop based on cultural learning make each of us in the world unique. When someone tends toward the collectivistic or interdependent end of the continuum, he or she considers individual choice as less important than the group and social obligations and responsibilities. When someone leans toward the individualistic end of the spectrum, individual rights are very important and social obligations are of primary importance. Countries that are more collectivistic include China, Japan, India,



**FIGURE 3-1** Individualism versus Collectivism



Nigeria, Cameroon, and Puerto Rico. Values that are important to these cultures include responsibility, honesty, politeness, respect for elders and family, and looking to the society for the values to embrace. Germans, European Americans, and the Dutch all embrace individualism, which includes self-maximization, independence, creativity, curiosity, assertiveness, self-esteem, and education. Cultures where people are face-to-face, in smaller communities, or are in a subsistence economy tend to value tradition, and change comes very slowly because they are more collectivistic. Examples include Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and many of the smaller African nations. In major cities, with extended economies, you find more individualism. Criticisms of the individualistic/collectivistic paradigm include that the paradigm is too simplistically applied to countries and all people within a country, that the paradigm does not allow for both individualistic and collectivistic values to coexist in the same culture, that some values are valued by both individualistic and collectivistic cultures, and that qualitative and quantitative variability exists within the individualistic/collectivistic paradigm (Greenfield, Keller, Fuligni, & Maynard, 2003).

Hofstede originally studied the IBM Corporation in 53 countries and determined the dimensions on which countries' business cultures differed. Using statistical analysis and theoretical reasoning, Hofstede developed five dimensions, which he labeled Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Collectivism vs. Individualism, Femininity vs. Masculinity, and Long-term vs. Short-term cultures. The countries were then ranked according to their scores (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). This study was the first of its kind, and the data were collected in the late 1970s from 50 countries in one organization; his first book was written in 1980. Since then, many more women are working in corporations than in the 1970s, more countries are involved in international business, and cultural changes have taken place during this time period; therefore, it is necessary to look at the Hofstede study data in relation to new studies that are being completed, such as the GLOBE study headed by House et al. (2004).

The United States ranked first in individualism in the Hofstede study, followed by Australia, Great Britain, Canada, and the Netherlands. Countries that ranked lowest on individualism included Colombia, Venezuela, Panama, Ecuador, and Guatemala (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). People from the United States place great importance on individuality and self-reliance. Well-known phrases typically used by parents to convey this emphasis on self-reliance include "Do your own thing," "You made your bed, now lie in it," and "You'd better look out for yourself; no one else will." U.S. Americans have been conditioned from childhood to think for themselves, to express their ideas and opinions, and to make their own choices; they are taught to consider themselves as individuals who are responsible for their own actions as well as for their own destinies. Parents start training their children early in this way of thinking; they offer them choices of food, clothes, and toys and usually accommodate their preferences. When the choice does not work out, the child then experiences the results of the decision. The goal of parents is to bring up a self-reliant, responsible person by the age of 18. When children move out of their parents' home at that age and are completely self-supporting, parents feel successful. Children who still live with their parents past the age of 18 or 20 are viewed as immature and unable to live independently. The value U.S. Americans place on individualism, self-reliance, and independence is perceived by persons of different cultures as being self-centered with little consideration for other people (Althen, 2003). This emphasis on individuality carries over into college/university choices as well as job choices that may take children away from friends and family members. Although individualism and the value placed on the family as an important unit are often associated, evidence shows that this relationship may not always exist. Costa Ricans, for example, have individualistic tendencies but they also value the extended family structure. Examining cultures within cultures is, therefore, important.

In other cultures, such as the Japanese, emphasis is placed on the group approach rather than on the individual approach to all aspects of life. The Chinese and Malaysians also value the group approach and the family. Their concern with following family traditions and with respecting the opinions of their parents is perceived as a sign of weakness and indecisiveness by U.S. Americans.

The GLOBE study found individualism/collectivism to have multiple levels within the two constructs. They discovered an in-group collectivism and institutional collectivism. The institutional scale showed societal variability that was not captured by the in-group scale (House et al., 2004).

The Power Distance Index is concerned with inequality within a society and how the country distinguishes between inequalities. The inequality can be of power, wealth, status, and social position, as well as physical and intellectual differences. In the business world, it concerns whether the employee and boss prefer a dependent or independent relationship with each other. The index measures the extent to which the weaker members expect and accept the unequal distribution of power (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). The GLOBE study found that strong power distance was associated with male-dominated societies. In addition, they also found that where power distance was strong, it was also most disliked (House et al., 2004).

The Masculinity and Femininity Index concerns how a society views assertiveness versus modesty. It is a relative construct rather than a biological distinction being made between countries. Although the two terms are derived from what is considered important in life to the two genders (masculine includes earnings, recognition, advancement, and challenge; feminine includes manager, cooperation, living area, and employment security), the country's dimensional position and equality of the genders in the workplace have no relationship with each other (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). The GLOBE study on the gender egalitarianism of a country is probably more appropriate for intercultural business communication because it discusses the implications of the differences in gender egalitarianism. Societies that believe men and women are suited for similar positions are more gender egalitarian than societies that believe the roles for men and women should be different. The GLOBE study found that the cultural value of gender egalitarianism affected the type of leadership dimensions of charisma, participatory, or self-protector. In societies where men and women are more gender egalitarian, they rate the leadership dimensions more similarly (House et al., 2004).

The Uncertainty Avoidance Index measures the threat of ambiguity and unknown situations. Does a person embrace the unknown or does he or she become anxious concerning the unknown? Countries in which people have a strong uncertainty avoidance behavior tend to have a lot of laws and rules specifying correct behaviors as opposed to the countries with weak uncertainty avoidance behavior in which people only want rules when they are absolutely necessary (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). In the GLOBE study, uncertainty avoidance was defined as the tendency toward orderliness, consistency, structure, and regulation. The study found that uncertainty avoidance may be related to societal, economic, and organizational values such as innovation, perception of risk, per capita cash holdings, and growth. Higher uncertainty avoidance values were found where there was higher team-orientation, humane orientation, self-protective leadership, and lower participative and charismatic leadership values (House et al., 2004).

The difference in a country's orientation to long-term or short-term goals can affect business. A long-term orientation is concerned with the future, perseverance, thrift, hard work, learning, openness, accountability, and self-discipline. A short-term orientation is concerned with the bottom line, control systems, respecting tradition, preserving face, and fulfilling social obligations (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). The GLOBE study calls this future orientation. They found that all cultures value future orientation whether or not they practice it except for Denmark.



Countries that had weak future practices aspire to having stronger future orientation. Lack of visionary leadership or government control seems to indicate weaker future orientation practices. The Hofstede and GLOBE scales showed no relationship to each other (House et al., 2004).

A brief description of selected cultural values of 10 countries with which the United States conducts most of its international business follows (Axtell et al., 1997; Bosrock, 1994, 1995a, 1995b; Country Studies, 2008; *CultureGrams*, 2008; Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005).

## Canada

In Canada, women are accepted in business and government and are well represented. As in the United States, businesswomen feel free to invite businessmen to lunch or dinner; the one who extends the invitation usually pays. The two largest religious groups are Catholicism and Protestantism, but people of British descent are mostly Protestant. Canada also has significant numbers of Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, and Sikhs. Canada, like the United States, believes in the separation of church and state. Canada is a work-oriented culture; both parents often work outside the home. Canada is a highly individualistic society; the country tied with the Netherlands and Hungary for fourth place in Hofstede's ranking of individualistic countries.

## China

In China, the official government position is that citizens should be atheists. The Chinese constitution guarantees religious freedom with certain limitations. Many religions are practiced, including Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, and Christianity. Confucianism, a philosophy and a way of life, is practiced by the majority of the Chinese. China is a collectivistic society. Both women and men are employed in the economy. However, women generally do not have the highest positions in the economy although purportedly women are equal to men. Hofstede ranks China as 56th, tied with Bangladesh, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, and West Africa in the ranking of individualistic countries.

Hong Kong's religious philosophies include Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism; only 10% of the population is Christian. Laws protect religious freedom. Both men and women are employed in the economy. The people in Hong Kong tend to be less conservative than the rest of China.

## France

Although most urban French women work outside the home, few hold top business positions except in fashion, cosmetics, advertising, and art. Although many French men do not readily accept French women in business, women from other countries, especially those from Canada and the United States, are generally accepted. A businesswoman may feel free to invite a French man to lunch and pay the bill. The majority (85%) of the people of France are Roman Catholic, however, few attend mass regularly. A small number are Protestant, Jewish, or Buddhist. France is a moderately individualistic society; the country tied with Sweden for 13th place in Hofstede's ranking of individualistic countries.

## Germany

Although East German women have always worked, West German women have been catching up for the past 30 years. West German women have had more traditional family values, and more of them are now pursuing university degrees and careers (Country Studies, 2008). Although sex discrimination is unlawful in Germany, cases are rarely pursued. A businesswoman should feel free to invite a German businessman to dinner and pay the bill without incident.

About 34% of the German people are Protestant, and 34% are Roman Catholic. Muslims are 4%. Although a number of other religions are active in Germany, almost 28% of the people have no official religious affiliation. In Hofstede's ranking of individualistic countries, Germany ranked 18th.

## Japan

Women are highly visible in today's Japanese business world, comprising about 50% of the workforce. However, the majority hold lower-level staff positions, with only 10.1% in management positions (Fackler, 2007). Japanese women have made progress in the areas of government, advertising, publishing, and such technical fields as engineering. The possibility of their making significant advances to the higher levels of management in the near future is unlikely because traditionally the Japanese power structure has always been male dominated. Many families of Japanese people practice a combination of Buddhism and Shinto. Only about 1% of the Japanese are Christian. Japan is not an individualistic culture; in Hofstede's ranking of individualistic societies, the country was tied with Argentina and Morocco for 33rd place. The Japanese traditionally place the welfare of the group above the welfare of the individual. They respect age and value ambition, education, hard work, loyalty, and politeness.

## Mexico

The role of women in Mexican society is changing. In the past, very few women entered business and politics. Now, however, Mexican women are holding more important positions in business and politics and are visible in the professions as dentists, doctors, lawyers, and teachers. Women were 23.5% of the workforce in 2006 (Nolan, 2007). Although men control the Mexican society, women control the men. Foreign businesswomen are not advised to invite Mexican businessmen to dinner because a man and woman dining alone suggests that they are romantically involved. The predominant religion (practiced by 89% of Mexicans) is Catholicism; small percentages are of Protestant and Jewish faith. Although the Catholic church has little political influence, it does play an important role in the Mexican culture. Mexico is not considered an individualistic culture; the country was ranked 46th and tied with Bulgaria and Romania in Hofstede's ranking of individualistic countries. However, Mexicans have a sense of individualism in certain areas. For example, they try very hard to distinguish themselves from other Mexicans as they are aware of how they are perceived personally. Mexicans also value the family and personal relationships.

## The Netherlands

Women are egalitarian in the Netherlands. The Netherlands is one of the leading nations in Europe for work equality between the genders. The religions practiced in the Netherlands are Roman Catholic (31%); Protestant, which is largely Dutch Reformed (21%); Muslim (4.4%); and other religions that make up about 3% of the population. The role of religion has diminished, and there is a strong separation of church and state. Although the Dutch are known for their liberalism, it is not a topic of polite conversation. The Netherlands ranks fourth, tied with Canada and Hungary, on the individualism index of Hofstede.

## South Korea

Women are not considered equal to men in South Korea; there is still a separation of female and male roles. In South Korea, 50% of the population is Christian, but Confucianism permeates the culture. Interactions are determined by a person's status and relationship with others. South Korea ranked 63rd in Hofstede's study on individualism and collectivism.

## Taiwan

While most women in Taiwan work, they continue to take care of their homes and children. Although Taiwan is still a male-dominated society, a strong women's movement exists. In Taiwan, 93% of the people practice a combination of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism; about 5% are Christians. Taiwan is 64th on Hofstede's study of individualism and collectivism.

## United Kingdom (England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland)

Although British women have made progress in the workplace, they have not fared as well as women in the United States and Canada. In 2008, the women of the United Kingdom (UK) made up 16.7% of the members of the House of Commons; in the United States, 15.2% of the House of Representatives seats and 18% of the Senate seats were held by women. According to 2008 figures, 19.5% of British barristers (lawyers) were women, while 30% of U.S. lawyers were women. England's state religion is the Church of England (Anglican Church) headed by the Queen. Although it no longer has political power, the Church has had much influence on England throughout its history. Other religions represented in the UK include Roman Catholic, Protestant (Presbyterian and Methodist), and Judaism. The Church of Wales is also an Anglican church with its own archbishop, and the Church of Scotland is a Presbyterian church. Northern Ireland is 44% Catholic. Three percent of UK's population is Muslim, 1% is Hindu, 0.7% is Sikh, and 0.5% is Jewish. Many in the UK claim no religious affiliation, and of those who do claim a religious affiliation, few are regular at church services. The UK is a very individualistic society; it is ranked third in Hofstede's ranking of individualistic countries.

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## Terms

- Attitudes 56
- Attribution 55
- Attribution training 55
- Collectivism 63
- Ethical standards 60
- Individualism 63
- Perception 55
- Semantics 54
- Uncertainty-reduction theory 55
- Values 51
- Work 58
- Work attitudes 58
- Work ethic 58

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## EXERCISE 3.1

*Instructions:* Circle T for true or F for false.

1. T F Values are learned; they are not innate.
2. T F In the United States, the family is a top priority.
3. T F A characteristic valued by U.S. persons is directness.
4. T F People in Asian cultures value history.
5. T F Semantic differences between cultures that speak the same language are rare.
6. T F The word "yes" means the same in all languages.
7. T F Women in management are treated similarly in all cultures.
8. T F Japan has a well-enforced equal employment law preventing discrimination against women.
9. T F The U.S. society is considered to have a strong work ethic.
10. T F Ethical standards are culture specific.

## Questions and Cases for Discussion

1. Explain how values are formed.
2. In what ways are the values of persons in the United States different from those of persons in other cultures?
3. Explain how semantic differences can affect intercultural communication. Give some examples.
4. Explain what is meant by the term attribution.
5. How are attitudes toward women culturally different? In what countries are women and men treated equally in the workplace?
6. Explain the differences between work attitudes in the United States and other countries. Are your personal work attitudes typical of the U.S. culture or another culture?
7. How are attitudes toward ethics in the United States different from those in Latin America?
8. What role does religion play in conducting business in the United States and Saudi Arabia?
9. Explain individualism. Give examples of cultures that are primarily individualistic.
10. Explain collectivism. Give examples of cultures that are primarily collectivistic.

## CASES

The following procedure is recommended for analyzing the cases: (a) read the case carefully paying attention to details; (b) read the questions at the end of the case; (c) reread the case, taking notes on or highlighting the details needed for answering the questions; (d) identify relevant facts, underlying assumptions, and critical issues of the case; (e) list possible answers to the questions; and (f) select the most logical response to the question. Your professor may ask that you submit answers to the case questions in writing.

### Case 1

Ching Lee was transferred by his Asian firm to assume a managerial position in a large automobile production plant in the United States. In his first report to his supervisor, he expressed concern that U.S. workers were not giving him the proper respect. What behaviors by U.S. workers could have led Ching Lee to draw this conclusion?

### Case 2

A U.S. firm sent its senior-level manager, Laura Green, to negotiate a contract for a chain of fast-food restaurants in Saudi Arabia. What cultural attitudes and behaviors related to gender should she expect to encounter?

### Case 3

When Brandon Hunt was sent to Mexico to oversee a production facility for his company, he became concerned over what he perceived to be a lack of seriousness about work on the part of Mexican workers. Employees were frequently late for work, left early, or did not come in at all. When questioned, employees explained that they had to help members of their family with their problems. Explain the apparent differences in U.S. American and Mexican attitudes toward work.

### Case 4

When Disney opened its \$4.4 billion Euro Disneyland outside Paris, concerns over the park's impact on French culture were expressed. To begin with, the French dedicate Sundays only to family outings. In addition, they are unaccustomed to snacking and eat promptly at 12:30, which creates bottlenecks at parks and restaurants. Disney learned that French employees objected to providing the friendly greetings and smiles expected of all amusement park workers. They then hired multilingual employees from all over Europe because Disney's goal was to attract people from all countries of Europe. A complaint of European investors was that rigid U.S. management style did not take into account the values

and customs of the people it intended to attract. For example, Europeans often bring their own lunches and do not spend money at the park's gourmet restaurants and hotels. The park initially lost money after it opened in 1992. Discuss the course of action Disney could take to accommodate the values and customs of the people it hopes to attract.

### Case 5

A mission of several U.S. businesspeople visited Taiwan. After meeting with the high-level officials of the Taiwanese firm, one of the U.S. people stated that although the U.S. firm members were

received with courtesy and listened intently to comments, the U.S. group members unanimously agreed that they did not have a clear understanding of the points the Taiwanese wanted to make. They also shared the impression that the atmosphere was chilly during the meeting and that the Taiwanese appeared arrogant. During the meeting, as reported in the local Taiwanese paper the next day, the Taiwanese extended their utmost courtesy, were good listeners, did not strongly push their own views, and felt the U.S. group appreciated the fact they had not been aggressive. What went wrong? How is silence being used and confused in this situation? How do the differences in individualism and collectivism affect this situation?

## Activities

1. Ask one person from each of the groups listed this question: "What is your attitude toward work?" Report their responses to the class.
  - a. blue-collar worker
  - b. business professional
  - c. educator
  - d. high school student
  - e. college student
2. Clip an article from the local newspaper related to ethics in business; summarize the article for class members.
3. Ask a professor or student from another culture to speak to the class on attitudes toward women in his or her culture.
4. Prepare a list of women in your state who have achieved high-ranking positions in either government or business. List the special qualifications these women possess that make them qualified for their positions. Prepare a similar list of women in high-ranking positions in another country of your choice.
5. Prepare a list of words (other than those mentioned in the chapter) that have different meanings in other areas of the United States or in other English-speaking countries.

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