Values, attitudes and behaviour: cross-cultural diversity

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- Attitudes, Their Sources and Types
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Cultural Orientations

The cultural orientation of a society reflects the complex interaction of the values, attitudes, and behaviours displayed by its members. Individuals express culture and its normative qualities through the values that they hold about life and the world around them. These values, in turn, affect their attitudes about the form of behaviour considered more appropriate and effective in any given situation. The continually changing patterns of individual and group behaviour eventually influence the society's culture, and the cycle begins again. What is the difference among values, attitudes, and behaviour?

Values

Value is that which is explicitly or implicitly desirable to an individual or a group and which influences the selection from available modes, means, and ends of action. Values can be both consciously and unconsciously held. Values are therefore relatively general beliefs that either define what is right and wrong or specify general preferences.

Values represent basic convictions that "a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence." They contain a judgmental element in that they carry an individual's ideas as to what is right, good, or desirable. Values have both content and intensity attributes. The content attribute says that a mode of conduct or end-state of existence is important. The intensity attribute specifies how important it is. When we rank an individual's values in terms of their intensity, we obtain that person's value system. All of us have a hierarchy of values that forms our value system. This system is identified by the relative importance we assign to such values as freedom, pleasure, self-respect, honesty, obedience, and equality.

Importance of Values
Values are important to the study of organizational behaviour because they are the foundation for the understanding of attitudes and motivation and because they influence our perceptions, attitudes and behaviour. Suppose that you enter an organization with the view that allocating pay on the basis of performance is right, whereas allocating pay on the basis of seniority is wrong. How are you going to react if you find that the organization you have just joined rewards seniority and not performance? You're likely to be disappointed and this can lead to job dissatisfaction and the decision not to exert a high level of effort since "it's probably not going to lead to more money, anyway." Would your attitudes and behaviour be different if your values aligned with the organization's pay policies? Most likely.

Sources of Our Value Systems

Why is it that, at least historically in many European countries, achievement has been considered good and being lazy has been considered bad? The answer is that, in our culture, certain values have developed over time and are continuously reinforced. Achievement, peace, cooperation, equity, and democracy are societal values that are considered desirable. These values are not fixed, but when they change, they do it so very slowly.

The values we hold are essentially established in our early years - from parents, teachers, friends, and others. Your early ideas of what is right and wrong were probably formulated from the views expressed by your parents. As you grew up, and were exposed to other value systems, you may have altered a number of your values.

Interestingly, values are relatively stable and enduring. This has been explained as a result of the way in which they are originally learned. When we are children, we are told that a certain behaviour or outcome is always desirable or always undesirable. There are no grey areas. It is this absolute or "black white" learning of values that more or less assures their stability and endurance.

Types of Values

We'll review the following approaches to developing value typologies.

**ALLPORT and associates**

One of the earliest efforts to categorize values was made by Allport and his associates. They identified six types of values:

- **Theoretical:** Places high importance on the discovery of truth through a critical and rational approach
- **Economic:** Emphasizes the useful and practical
- **Aesthetic:** Places the highest value on form and harmony
- **Social:** Assigns the highest value to the love of people
- **Political:** Places emphasis on acquisition of power and influence
- **Religious:** Is concerned with the unity of experience and understanding of the cosmos as a whole

**ROKEACH value survey**

Milton Rokeach created the Rokeach Value Survey (RVS). The RVS consists of two sets of values, with each set containing eighteen individual value items. One set,
called **terminal values**, refers to desirable *end-states* of existence such as a comfortable life (a prosperous life) an exciting life, a sense of accomplishment, a world at peace, a world of beauty, equality, etc. These are the goals that a person would like to achieve during his or her lifetime. The other set, called **instrumental values**, refers to preferable *modes of behaviour* such as ambitious, broadminded, competent, courageous, etc.

### Attitudes

An attitude is a construct that expresses values and disposes a person to act or react in a certain way toward something. Attitudes are present in the relationship between a person and some kind of object. **Attitudes** are evaluative statements - either favourable or unfavourable - concerning objects, people, or events. They reflect how one feels about something. Attitudes are not the same as values, but the two are interrelated.

#### Sources of Attitudes

Attitudes, like values, are acquired from parents, teachers, and peer group members. In our early years, we begin modelling our attitudes after those we admire, respect, or maybe even fear. In contrast to values, your attitudes are less stable. Advertising messages, for example, attempt to alter your attitudes toward a certain product or service.

In organizations, attitudes are important because they affect job behaviour. If workers believe, for example, that supervisors, auditors, bosses, and time and motion engineers are all in conspiracy to make employees work harder for the same or less money, then it makes sense to try to understand how these attitudes were formed, their relationship to actual job behaviour, and how they can be made more favourable.

#### Types of Attitudes

A person can have thousands of attitudes, but organizational behaviour focuses our attention on a very limited number of job-related attitudes. These job-related attitudes tap positive or negative evaluations that employees hold about aspects of their work environment. Most of the research in organizational behaviour has been concerned with three attitudes: job satisfaction, job involvement, and organizational commitment.

### Behaviour

Behaviour is any form of human action. For example, based on their culture, middle easterners stand closer together (a behaviour) than North Americans, while Japanese stand farther apart than either North Americans or middle easterners. Latin Americans touch each other more frequently than do Japanese. People’s behaviour is defined by their culture.

#### Stereotypes vs. Cultural Generalizations
Diversity exists both within and among cultures; but within a single culture, certain behaviours are favoured and others repressed. The norm of a society is the most common and generally most acceptable pattern of values, attitudes, and behaviour. For example, in international business a man wearing a dark grey business suit reflects the norm through a favoured behaviour, whereas a man wearing a green business suit does not. A cultural orientation describes the attitudes of most of the people most of the time, not of all of the people all of the time. Accurate stereotypes refer to societal and cultural norms. The cultural descriptions always refer to the norm or stereotype; they refer to the behaviour of all people in the culture.

A stereotype is a belief that all people from a culture behave a certain way. It is an opinion based on one’s own cultural values and prejudices and on little information about the other culture. For example, a woman from a culture that values hard work looks at a people from a fictional land called Zibi. In Zibi, people work at their jobs about five hours a day. So, the woman says, “people from Zibi are lazy.” This is a stereotype because she states that every person from Zibi is the same and it is an opinion based more on the woman’s own values than on any thoughtful observation of Zibian values or lifestyle.

We make generalizations about different styles of business. This does not mean that every person who lives in a particular culture will do business in a way that fits the generalization. Within each culture there are many choices. There is, however, in every culture a standard way of doing things. The cultural generalizations describe those standards and the values that guide those standards. For example, one could make generalization about Zibians and say, “People in Zibi usually work about five hours a day. They spend the rest of the day taking care of family and farming. Family life is highly valued.” A generalization is based on observation, not prejudice. It explains the standard of a culture but does not determine how every person in that culture behaves.

Stereotyping involves a form of categorization that organizes our experience and guides our behaviour toward ethnic and national groups. Stereotypes never describe individual behaviour; rather, they describe the behavioural norm for members of a particular group.

Stereotypes, like other forms of categories, can be helpful or harmful depending on how we use them. Effective stereotyping allows people to understand and act appropriately in new situations. A stereotype can be helpful when it is

- **Consciously held.** The person should be aware that he or she is describing a group norm rather than the characteristics of a specific individual.
- **Descriptive rather than evaluative.** The stereotype should describe what people from this group will probably be like and not evaluate those people as good or bad.
- **Accurate.** The stereotype should accurately describe the norm for the group to which the person belongs.
- **The first best guess** about a group prior to having direct information about the specific person or persons involved.
- **Modified,** based on further observation and experience with the actual people and situations.
To be effective, international managers must be aware of cultural stereotypes and learn to set them aside when faced with contradictory evidence. They cannot pretend not to stereotype.

Values Orientation Dimensions

As shown in table 1, six basic dimensions describe the cultural orientations of societies: people’s qualities as individuals, their relationship to nature and the world, their relationship to other people, their primary type of activity, and their orientation in space and time. These six dimensions answer the questions: who am I? How do I see the world? How do I relate to other people? What do I do? How do I use space and time? Each orientation reflects a value with behavioural and attitudinal implications.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception Of</th>
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<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
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<td>World</td>
<td>Dominant</td>
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<td>Human Relations</td>
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<td>Activity</td>
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How People See Themselves

What is the nature of the individual: good or evil? Americans traditionally see people as a mixture of good and evil, capable of choosing one over the other. They believe in the possibility of improvement through change. Other cultures see people as basically evil - as reflected in the Puritans’ orientation - or as basically good - as reflected in utopian societies throughout the ages. Societies that consider people good tend to trust people a great deal, whereas societies that consider people evil tend to suspect and mistrust them in high-trust societies, people leave doors unlocked and do not fear robbery. In low-trust societies, people bolt their doors. Managers in the People’s Republic of China describe their tradition as combining the extremes of good (Confucian tradition) with evil (the tradition of Lao Tzu) - a marriage of opposites. They also describe their belief that peasants are good and rich people are not so good.

Apart from their tendencies towards good or evil, can human beings improve themselves? Societies and organizations vary in the extent to which they believe that adults can change or improve. For example, organizations that believe people can change emphasize training and development, whereas organizations that believe people are incapable of change can emphasize selection systems.

People's Relationship to Their World
What is a person's relationship to the world? Are people dominant over their environment, in harmony with it, or subjugated by it? North Americans generally see themselves as dominant over nature. Other societies, such as Chinese and Navaho, live in harmony with nature. They see no real separation between people and their natural environment, and their beliefs allow them to live at peace with the environment. In contrast to both of these orientations, a few remote tribal societies see people as subjugated by nature. In these cultures people accept, rather than interfere with, the inevitable forces of nature.

How does the business organization see its environment? The dominance orientation can be illustrated by Soviet Union's and North Americans' approach to agriculture. Based on the assumption that people can and ethically should modify nature to enhance their own well being, dominance-oriented agribusiness executives use fertilizers and insecticides to increase crop yield. By contrast, harmony-oriented farmers attempt only to plant the 'right' crops in the 'right' places at the 'right' time of the year in order to maintain the environment's good condition. Farmers subjugated by nature hope that sufficient rain will fall, but they do not construct irrigation systems. They hope that pests will not attack the crops, but they do not use insecticides.

**Personal Relationships: Individualism or Collectivism**

Americans are individualists; they use personal characteristics and achievements to define themselves, and they value individual welfare over that of the group. By contrast, in group-oriented societies people define themselves as members of clans or communities and consider the group's welfare most important. The United States is strongly individualistic and weak on groups, teams, and communities. Compared with people in more group-oriented societies, Americans have more geographic mobility and their relationships, especially with co-workers, are less permanent. More group-oriented societies such as Japan, China, and the Israeli Kibbutzim emphasize group harmony, unity, and loyalty. Individuals in these societies fear being personally ostracized or bringing shame to their group for behaviour that deviates from the norm.

Personnel policies also follow either individual or group orientations. Individual-oriented personnel directors tend to hire those best qualified to do the job based on personal skills and expertise. Individualistic applicants will therefore submit resumes listing personal, educational, and professional achievements. Group-oriented personnel directors also tend to hire those most qualified, but their prime qualifications are trustworthiness, loyalty, and compatibility with co-workers. They hire friends and relatives of people already working for the organization. Therefore, rather than sending well-prepared resumes listing individual achievements, applicants seek introductions to the personnel director through a friend or relative, and initial discussions centre on mutual friends and family or community members. The management of a group-oriented company in Ghana believes that only people who are known by other employees in the company can be trusted to act responsibly.

The organization of firms in individualistic and collective societies differs. In individualistic societies such as those of Canada and the United States, organization charts generally specify individual positions, each with a detailed job description listing formal duties and responsibilities. By contrast,
organization charts in more group-oriented societies such as Hong Kong, Indonesia, and Malaysia tend only to specify sections, departments, and divisions, except for the top one or two positions. Group-oriented societies describe assignments, responsibilities, and reporting relationships in collective terms.

The individual versus group orientation also influences decision making. In North America, individuals make decisions. Decisions, therefore, are made relatively quickly, although implementation frequently gets delayed while the decision is explained and concurrence gained from other members of the organization. By contrast in Japan, a group-oriented culture, many people make the decision rather than one. The group process of decision making is less flexible and more time-consuming than the individualistic system because concurrence must be achieved prior to making the decision. However, since all parties already understand and concur, they can implement a decision almost immediately.

Activity: Doing or Being

Americans' dominant mode of activity is doing or action. Managers in doing-oriented cultures motivate employees with promotions, raises, bonuses, and other forms of public recognition. The contrasting orientations are being and control. The being orientation finds people, events, and ideas flowing spontaneously; the people stress release, indulgence of existing desires, and working for the moment. If managers in being-oriented cultures do not enjoy their colleagues and current projects, they quit; they will not work strictly for future rewards. People in control-oriented society restrain their desires by detaching themselves from objects in order to allow each person to develop an integrated whole. The do-er is more active, the be-er is more passive. The doer actively tries to achieve the most in life; the be-er wants to experience life.

The activity orientation also explains why people work. To achieve goals, do-ers maximize work; to live life fully, be-ers minimize work. Increasing the salaries of doers and beers has the opposite effect. Salary increases motivate do-ers to work more hours because of the rewards; they motivate be-ers to work fewer hours because they can earn enough money in less time and still enjoy life.

Time: Past, Present, or Future

What is the temporal focus of human life? How do societies use time? Are they oriented to the past, the present, or the future? Past-oriented cultures believe that plans should be evaluated in terms of their fit with the customs and traditions of society and that innovation and change are justified only according to past experience. By contrast, future-oriented cultures believe that they should evaluate plans in terms of the projected future benefit to be gained. Future-oriented people justify innovation and change in terms of future economic payoffs and have less regard for past social or organizational customs and traditions.

In contrast with most North Americans, most Europeans are past-oriented. North American business people focus on the present and near future. Similarly, North American employment practices are also short-term. Managers who do not perform well during their first year on a new job are
fired or at best not promoted. By contrast, Japan has a very long-term future oriented time horizon. When large Japanese firms hire employees, the commitment of both parties is for life.

Societies have different standards of temporal precision. What defines when people arrive late and when they are on time for work, for meetings, or for business lunches? How much variation is allowed? How long are scheduled appointments - five minutes or two hours? What is the typical length of an assignment - one week or three years?

Space: Public or Private

How do people use physical space? Is a conference room, an office, or a building seen as public or private space? When can I enter an office directly, and when must I wait outside for permission to enter? The public versus private dimension defines the arrangement of organizational space. North Americans give private offices to more important employees, and even open offices have partitions between desks. They hold important meetings behind closed doors, usually in the executive's large private office, and generally with minimal interruptions. The Japanese, by contrast, have no partitions dividing desks; bosses often sit together with their employees in the same large room. Middle Easterners often have numerous people present during important meetings. Both Middle Easterners and Japanese have a more public orientation than do North Americans.

Summary

Cultures vary in distinct and significant ways. Our ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving as human beings are neither random nor haphazard but are profoundly influenced by our cultural heritage. Until we leave our community, we are unaware of the dynamics of our shared culture. As we come in contact with people from other cultures, we become aware of our uniqueness and begin to appreciate our differences. In interacting with foreigners, we learn to recognize and value our fundamental humanity - our cultural similarities and dissimilarities. For years people have thought that organizations were beyond the influence of culture and that they were only determined by technology and task. Today we know that work is not simply a mechanistic outgrowth of either technology or task. At every level, culture profoundly influences organizational behaviour.

Key Terms

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<td>Categorization</td>
<td>Instrumental values</td>
<td>Stereotype</td>
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<td>Compatibility</td>
<td>Intensity attribute</td>
<td>Subjugation</td>
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<td>Content attribute</td>
<td>Interruption</td>
<td>Terminal values</td>
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<td>Cultural generalization</td>
<td>Judgmental element</td>
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<td>Cultural orientation</td>
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Literature


