

# Developments In Business Simulation & Experiential Exercises, Volume 22, 1995

## SOME OUTCOMES OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING: HOW THE CULTURAL DYNAMICS OF DIFFERENT COUNTRIES ARE REFLECTED IN WORKPLACE NORMS & VALUES

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### ABSTRACT

Employees in Russia, Brazil, USA and Hong Kong differ in how they value (1) a *clear and challenging goal*; (2) work group members' *liking and trusting* each other; (3) work group members' *high performance expectations*; (4) *designing a workgroup* for results; and (5) *getting topside support*. Females from different countries disagree on six of eight workgroup values, while males disagree on only three. Male/female value differences are found. Differences indicate (6) that US females place a higher value than males on *doing whatever is necessary*.

### INTRODUCTION

The Daniels College of Business (at Denver) has been assessing the affects and effects of its experiential programs over several years. Important to Denver's situation is the healthy ratio of non-US students (35%), from the 28 or more foreign countries represented.

It has been found that differences in perceptions about the importance of workplace characteristics exist between US and Non-US MBA students, as well as between males and females (Halterman, 1-993). These findings are compatible with those of Moyes (1994) who cautions us that *individuals bring deeply-rooted patterns of culture and belief to a new work environment*, creating a potential for conflict (p.112)."

A key determinant of people's norms and values is the type of activity in which they are involved (Katz and Kahn (1978: 389, 394; Meyer, 1994). Importantly, explains Hatch (1993: p. 662), "Without being conscious of their assumptions, members become conscious of their values (cf. Hofstede 1 993; and Moyes.

### THE SAMPLES EXAMINED

Our four national samples, each from a different country, are examined for respondents' work-values.

The instrument used was translated to each respondents' idiom; administered in the respondents country; in the respondents' language (cf. Hofstede; Sadowski, 1994). Administration in Russia and in Brazil was by researchers native to the areas.

### EXHIBIT 1 IMPORTANT WORK CHARACTERISTICS

- A. *Team members know the project's goals, and are challenged by them.*
- B. *The team is designed to get results.*
- C. *Team members know their jobs, and how to get them done.*
- D. *Members will do whatever is needed for the activity's success.*
- E. *Members like, trust, and help each other.*
- F. *Team members have high performance standards, and expect high performance from each other.*
- G. *The activity gets topside support, resources, and recognition.*

**Sample 1** 98 US (a) production, (b) food service, and (c) public agency workers. 150 females and 48 males.]

**Sample 2:** 24 Hong Kong (a) light manufacturing, (b) wholesaling, and (c) retailing workers. [16 males and 8 females.]

**Sample 3:** 11 7 Russian (a) production, (b) assembly, (c) supervisory, (d) marketing, and (e) shop workers. [37 females and 80 males.]

**Sample 4:** 33 Brazilian (a) administrative, (b) retail and (c) production workers. [12 females and 21 males.]

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## THE INSTRUMENT

Values of work groups are assessed on a 5-point Likert scale (Exhibit 1). Respondents are asked, "How important is this [characteristic] to a successful work team?" A response of "1" reflects "APPLIES WELL" (Cochran reliability = .74).

Our use of work values is supported by INSEAD's finding that respondent nationality primarily governs how questions about the structure and functions of organizations are answered (Moyes; cf. Meyer). Means, variance, F-scores, significances and confidence levels are computed.

## HYPOTHESES

Four null hypotheses are examined: *NO DIFFERENCES EXIST IN THE WAY VALUES ARE ASSESSED BY:* (H<sub>1</sub>) Respondents in different countries; (H<sub>2</sub>) Females in different countries; (H<sub>3</sub>) Males in different countries; (H<sub>4</sub>) Males and Females in different countries.

## RESULTS

Results are shown in Tables 1 through 5. The samples differ from each other on five of the eight values.

### Differences Among Countries

(See Table 1) Respondents *disagree* on the importance of a *CHALLENGING GOAL; LIKING & TRUSTING EACH OTHER; EXPECTING HIGH PERFORMANCE; DESIGNING THE WORKGROUP; and TOPSIDE SUPPORT.*

### Differences Among Females

(See Table 2.) Female groups disagree on the importance of *KNOWING*

*ONE'S JOB; the LEADER; DOING WHATEVER IS NECESSARY; WORKGROUP DESIGN; EXPECTING PERFORMANCE; and TOPSIDE SUPPORT.*

### Differences Among Males

(See Table 3.) Male groups disagree on the importance of *SUPPORT..., DESIGN..., and EXPECTATIONS.*

## Male/Female Differences

Table 5 (data not shown) displays *significances* of differences between the sexes. Male/female differences are found among the combined sample for *all values*, due to "country" variance. One male-female difference is probably due to gender variance.

**TABLE 1  
ALL FOUR GROUP RESPONSES**

	USA 98 X	HNGK 24 X	RUS 117 X	BRZL 33 X	#F	p.
LEADER	1.49	1.25	1.58	1.30	1.81	.146
JOBS	1.46	1.29	1.62	1.67	2.20	.088
GOAL	1.42	1.67	1.64	1.46	3.11	*.03
TRUST	1.84	1.58	1.98	1.49	3.40	*.018
DOES	1.78	2.08	2.04	1.79	1.94	.123
EXPECTS	1.68	2.79	2.03	1.91	10.18	*.000
DESIGN	1.55	2.25	2.52	1.33	25.29	*.000
SUPPORT	1.88	2.29	3.10	1.61	25.98	*.000
F:7.29;p.000						

**TABLE 2  
ALL FEMALE RESPONSES**

	USA 50 X	HNGK 24 X	RUS 37 X	BRZL 12 X	#F	p.
JOBS	1.26	1.25	1.70	2.00	5.48	*.002
LEAD	1.46	1.25	1.81	1.00	3.49	*.018
GOAL	1.38	1.56	1.84	1.50	2.21	.091
DOES	1.56	1.94	2.16	1.50	4.05	*.009
DESIGN	1.40	2.13	2.51	1.33	11.00	*.000
TRUST	1.82	1.69	2.19	1.42	2.46	.066
EXPECT	1.56	2.75	2.60	1.83	10.71	*.000
SUPPRT	2.04	2.00	3.30	1.50	13.33	*.000
F:4.15 p.000 # = ANOVA F; Sig.: < .05						

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## FINDINGS

### Finding #1

Hypothesis 1 is rejected (see Tables 1 & 4). Respondents of the countries differ in how they value Designing work groups for results; performance expectations; Liking & trusting each other; Topside support; and a challenging goal.

### Finding #2

Hypothesis 2 is rejected (see Table 2). Females of the four

**TABLE 3  
ALL MALE RESPONSES**

	USA 48 X	HNK 8 X	RUS 80 X	BRZL 21 X	*F	p
LEAD	1.52	1.25	1.48	1.48	.30	.828
JOBS	1.67	1.38	1.58	1.48	.66	.577
GOAL	1.46	1.88	1.69	1.43	1.46	.226
TRUST	1.85	1.38	1.88	1.52	1.81	.148
EXPECT	1.81	2.88	1.78	1.95	5.10	*.002
DOES	2.00	2.38	2.00	1.95	.43	.732
DESIGN	1.71	2.50	2.53	1.33	13.62	*.000
SUPPORT	1.73	2.88	3.01	1.67	19.59	*.000
Pillais F = 4.41; p.000						

countries differ from each other in how they rate six of the eight values.

### Finding #3

Hypothesis 3 is rejected (see Table 3). Males of the four countries differ from each other in how they value Designing work groups for results; High performance expectations; and Topside support.

### Finding #4

Hypothesis 4 is rejected (see Table 5). Gender differences are found in each country, in different ways.

As Table 5 displays, the number of differences based on individual values is USA= 3; Brazil= 2; Russia= 1; and Hong Kong= 1.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

As table 4 so succinctly shows us, each country's set of workplace values is unique. Ferreting out the cultural differences within, between, and among people is not only challenging, but informative.

**TABLE 4  
ALL RESPONSE GROUPS COMPARED**

NATIONALITY	BRAZILIAN N=33	HONGKNG N=24	RUSSIAN N=117
USA N=98	F = 3.18 p = .003	F = 7.30 p = .000	F = 13.46 p = .000
BRAZILIAN		F = 4.91 p = .000	F = 8.71 p = .000
HONGKONG			F = 5.07 p = .000
ALL PAIRS DIFFERENT @ < = .05			

**TABLE 5  
SEX DIFFERENCES WITHIN GROUPS**

VAR/	LEAD	JOBS	GOAL	TRST	DOES	EXPC	DESN	SUPP	F	p.
USA, p.		.001			.010		.026		2.95	.006
H-								.050	1.20	.363
RUS-						.000			2.30	.025
B-	.022	.013							3.49	.008
O-	.036	.051	.018	.006	.050	.000	.000	.000	7.07	.000

Coping with disparities is better directed if one first finds out where and how strongly they exist.

This exploratory research suggests a couple of things to us: (1) Work-related values in different cultures can be compared and re-compared using operational terms; and (2) trainee value levels from earlier 'experiential learnings' can be identified. This may help focus our front-end diagnoses of "where to begin" and "how to approach" further training.

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