

# Workplace Values: Cross-Cultural Insights from the Service Industries

by

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*With the globalization of businesses in recent years, managers must attract and retain the right employees. Part of the fit between a worker and employer is in the area of values. Employees bring personal values to the job and they also are asked to display the workplace values of the organization. Managers must be sure that all workers share the values of the organization. Few studies examine workplace values cross-culturally and qualitatively. Using existing theory, we find that service workers in three countries display workplace values that reflect cultural norms. Managerial implications and directions for future research are given.*

## 1. Introduction

The study of workplace values has become prevalent in management disciplines due to links to motivation (Paarlberg & Perry, 2007; Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959), employee satisfaction (Barrett, 1998; Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959), organizational commitment (Elizur & Koslowsky, 2001) and cross-cultural management (Mellahi, 2001; White, 2006). According to Williams (2002), values are “desirable end-states of existence for humankind” and are typically learned in society. In the workplace, values guide behavior and ultimately influence profitability. Accordingly, some businesses are moving toward the use of values-based management, an agenda in which company core values are shaped, vividly exhibited and practiced by all organizational members (Crawford and Scaletta, 2006). Given the significance of values, emphasis has shifted toward comprehending the linkages between cultural values and workplace values. Using a multi-cultural hospitality sample, White (2006) found that cultural orientation impacts how individuals value work aspects. A study by Miles, Sledge and Coppage (2008) also established a connection between cultural values and workplace outcomes amongst Brazilian workers. Geare, Edgar and McAndrew (2009) studied the workplace values of managers and workers in New Zealand. Both groups viewed the employment relationship with the employers with a unitarist rather than a pluralist lens. Interestingly, workers prioritized their careers ahead of the organizational priorities, while managers expressed organizational commitment ahead of personal career preferences. These findings suggest that the links between culture and values are multifaceted, and merit further study.

## **2. Qualitative Rationale**

Accordingly, this qualitative study explores the value differences between workers in China, Costa Rica and the United States (U.S.), as these countries have distinct cultural differences. Qualitative studies allow expanded meaning which is valuable to understanding cultural similarities and differences. A number of scholars have noted that quantitative studies contribute to theory building in the field of management (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 1994). Doz (2011) notes the relative infrequency of qualitative studies in international business research, due to factors such as the long time frame required to build theory, and the risk taking or out of the box thinking needed to perform such research, and the reticence of top journals to publish such work. However, he describes the unique benefits that qualitative research offers: “Rich, ‘thick’ process descriptions provide a guarantee against the temptation to rely on a single theoretical lens because they make obvious to the researcher that any single lens will shed only partial light on the phenomenon being researched... While true theory-agnostic grounded theorizing (Glazer & Strauss, 1967) is probably impossible, given the cognitive frames researchers carry with them, the richer the quantitative research the greater the chances of being free from excessive predetermined reliance on a given theory and therefore the better the odds of genuine theory building” (Doz, 2011, pp. 583-584). It is our goal to use rich methods of data collection and data analysis to contribute to theory building regarding workplace values in the global marketplace.

This study contributes to the international business literature by extending the linkages between cultural and workplace values. Considerations include: What shared values are prominent in the workplace? Do shared values provide benefits for employees and organizations? What can managers do to promote the adoption of values in the workplace? The paper continues with a discussion on values. Study methodology and results follow. Finally, limitations and considerations for future research are offered.

## **3. Values**

Understanding values has become more vital as they influence attitudes and behavior and change less often than these components. Rokeach (1973) suggested that value development is influenced by culture, society and personality. Subsequently, it is believed that values have affective, cognitive and behavioral dimensions, and are linked to motivation (White, 2006). Several models and measures have been developed to study values. Early models such as the Minnesota Importance Questionnaire (MIQ), the Work Aspect Preference Scale and the Work Values Inventory (WVI) measured needs, work preferences and goals, respectively (White, 2006). Barrett (1998) offered a model of organizational values that is comparable to Maslow’s (1954) needs hierarchy, with 7 ordered values, beginning with survival, followed in order by relationship/belonging, self-esteem, transformation, internal cohesion, inclusion and unity. While the Barrett model is useful for assessing workplace values, it is hierarchical as opposed to circular or interactive, thus creating a more rigid structure. More recently, Pohlman and Gardiner (2000) use Value Theory to explain that the ideas and ideals that a person actually values will direct his or her behaviors and actions at work. Understanding

an employee's values is an important part of a manager's job in order to achieve a good fit between the worker and the organization, as well as creating a satisfying relationship on the part of both parties.

A useful tool for this qualitative analysis of culture and workplace values is the Values Framework offered by Jurkiewicz and Giacalone (2004). Its premise captures strategic components of workplace values and accordingly provides a guide for measurability and cultural reflection. The Values Framework includes the values of benevolence (kindness), generativity (leaving a legacy), humanism (live to improve humanity), integrity (honesty), justice (fairness), mutuality (community), receptivity (accepted by others), respect (consideration of others), responsibility (independent task completion), and trust (belief in others). According to the authors, the existence or non-existence of these workplace values can influence workplace outcomes. In a follow-up study, Kolodinsky, Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2008) reported that positive organizational outcomes are tied to the effective use of organizational values.

#### **4. Methods**

##### *Sample*

The sample consisted of employees from service industries in the Beijing region of China, the San Jose region of Costa Rica and the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. These locations were chosen for their service industry variety and geographic representation. Each region is also known as a high tourism area with growing economic development.

In each country, a diverse group of service employees was sought out through academic and business contacts of the principal investigators. In each country 50-60 respondents were selected for participation based upon workforce participation and job title in a service industry. Due to nonresponse rates, unusable data and incomplete surveys, the samples each yielded 40 usable responses, for a total sample size of 120.

##### *Analysis*

Before the study began, prospective participants were given information about the study as an academic research project and they were given information about the researchers. Participants were notified that their cooperation with the study was voluntary. They were given the chance to ask questions and opt out of the study before and during the research process. Data collection involved 3 techniques. First, employees were observed on the job. In the observations, 2 researchers recorded employee behaviors on the job. Second, questionnaires were administered to employees at work, including a diversity of work shifts. The surveys contained values-oriented questions using a 5 point scale along with demographic data requests and cultural influence queries. Surveys were distributed to shift managers who in turn gave them to their employees. For the Chinese and Costa Rican samples, in order to retain meaning, the survey was translated and back-translated to English with the aid of several native Chinese and Costa Ricans. Third, semi-structured interviews were conducted. Interviews were chosen because

they are among the most frequently used qualitative research techniques (Creswell, 1998). The interviews occurred during the employee breaks or before or after shifts. At each interview, 2 researchers and an interpreter were present to facilitate the exchange of information. The discussions began with an introduction to the topic of values. Then the discussion focused on cultural influences, workplace values, personal values, and the intersection of the 3 topics. The researchers recorded their findings independently.

Data analysis included evaluating transcripts of the observations and interviews as well as the questionnaires. Data coding, qualitative content analysis and comparisons to Jurkiewicz and Giacalone's (2004) Values Framework completed the evaluation. The first phase consisted of reviewing the transcribed interviews and observations with the coding themes, values, perceptions and behaviors related to the Values Framework. These actions were repeated 3 times to ensure validity (Miles and Domke-Damonte, 2000). Coded results were evaluated against the transcripts to facilitate reliability of the coding schemes. The transcripts were also compared to a sample of the original subjects. Following Lee (1991), this method allows for triangulation and validation of meaning in qualitative studies. As a check for inter-rater reliability, a list of definitions, participant answers, and coding categories were given to 2 assistants unfamiliar with the research. These assistants were asked to consult the appropriate coding categories and then classify each definition and response. The findings showed support for reliability of the coding categories with inter-rater agreement of 73% and 78%. Interclass correlations of .80 and .82 were achieved between each of the assistants and the researchers ( $p < .001$ ) (Miles and Domke-Damonte, 2000).

## 5. Results

The 3 samples are analyzed separately and then comparisons are made. The Values Framework of Jurkiewicz and Giacalone (2004) was used to identify meaningful observations, statements, quotes, and behaviors from the respondents. The findings are shown in Tables 1-7. Table 1 includes the average values ratings for each sample. The high and low scores for each country are noted, as well as the dimension high.

**Table 1**  
**Average Scores for the 10 Dimensions of the Values Framework**  
**(5 Point Scale)**

	China	Costa Rica	United States
BENEVOLENCE	3.81	4.23*	2.96
GENERATIVITY	4.05*	4.01	2.07^
HUMANISM	3.77*	3.18	3.48
INTEGRITY	3.08	3.67*	3.28

JUSTICE	3.62	2.50 <sup>^</sup>	4.63*
MUTUALITY	4.58*+	3.75	3.55
RECEPTIVITY	4.10	3.89	4.80*+
RESPECT	3.97	4.36*	3.27
RESPONSIBILITY	2.06 <sup>^</sup>	3.12	3.49*
TRUST	2.35	4.71*+	4.26

\*Dimension High; +Country High; ^Country Low

Table 2 includes the list of Chinese participants. Table 3 includes the Chinese Values Analysis.

**Table 2**  
**Respondent Descriptions and Coding Chinese Sample**

RESPONDENT	GENDER	POSITION	AGE
CH1	M	ACCOUNTANT	50S
CH2	M	NIGHT WORKER	40S
CH3	F	GYM WORKER	20S
CH4	F	SECRETARY	40S
CH5	F	HOUSEKEEPING	40S
CH6	F	WAITRESS	20S
CH7	M	SECURITY OFFICER	60S
CH8	M	ENGINEER	50S
CH9	F	WAITRESS	30S
CH0	M	MAINTENANCE	30S
CH11	M	MANAGER	40S
CH12	F	QUALITY INSPECTOR	50S
CH13	M	GOVERNMENT SECURITY	30S
CH14	F	BOOKEEPER	20S
CH15	M	STORE CLERK	20S
CH16	M	HEAD CASHIER	40S
CH17	M	TOUR DESK OPERATOR	40S
CH18	F	HOSTESS	20S
CH19	M	ASST MANAGER	40S
CH20	M	REPAIR MAN	20S
CH21	M	ACCOUNTANT	50S
CH22	F	CLEANING STAFF	30S
CH23	F	RECEPTIONIST	30S

CH24	M	PLUMBER	50S
CH25	M	COMPUTER TECHNICIAN	20S
CH26	M	BAGGAGE HANDLER	10S
CH27	M	FRONT DESK MANAGER	20S
CH28	F	BARTENDER	20S
CH29	F	SECRETARY	20S
CH30	F	GIFT SHOP WORKER	20S
CH31	F	STAFF	30S
CH32	F	STAFF	30S
CH33	M	TYPIST	30S
CH34	M	PLUMBER	50S
CH35	F	MAID	30S
CH36	M	BUS BOY	TEENS
CH37	F	CHIEF SECRETARY	30S
CH38	M	ENGINEER	40S
CH39	F	BUS DRIVER	30S
CH40	F	SPA WORKER	30S

**Table 3**  
**Chinese Values Analysis**

CHINESE SAMPLE			
VALUE	OBSERVATION	QUESTIONNAIRE	FOCUS GROUP
BENEVOLENCE	Employees in retail store kept the store open late to accommodate customers.	Most respondents expressed this value as important on the job.	"We exist for the customer."
GENERATIVITY	Employees showed respect and admiration for older workers on the same shift.	Links between the younger generation, the middle generation and the older generation were emphasized by respondents.	I do it "for me and my family."
HUMANISM	In spite of language differences, hotel manager was eager to please large group of international guests.	Workers showed compassion for hotel guests who did not understand the local culture.	Hotel workers had aids and resources such as dictionaries in order to serve guests.
INTEGRITY	Bank employees made sure that customers had proper documentation and forms for transactions of non-bank customers.	"It is important to do the right thing.	"We work hard to please the customers"

JUSTICE	Employees rotated handling the various customer stations.	Waiting in line for your turn is an expected behavior.	Young men and young women had equivalent positions in the company.
MUTUALITY	Family members collaborated to sell cultural crafts, where the mother had the role of the cashier.	In a small business, the shop owner paid the employees based on their contributions to overall sales.	Teams of workers worked together in quality control functions.
RECEPTIVITY	Tour guides from competing companies worked together on busy days to ensure that tourists completed the sightseeing agenda.	Common mealtime traditions served to bring employees together during lunch and dinner breaks.	Collectivist preferences were dominant in focus group discussions.
RESPECT	Workers offered elderly guests chairs to sit in and water to drink while waiting in line.	Workers showed respect for authority figures at work, such as the supervisor or boss.	“In Chinese society, the young are taught to respect their elders.”
RESPONSIBILITY	Manager of automotive service business refunded prepaid fees when the company could not accommodate the customers.	Tour guides rearranged the daily schedule when some planned locations were not available.	Strong commitment to company policy and procedures.
TRUST	Bus drivers routinely watched over customers’ belongings when they left the vehicle.	Valet parking attendants displayed trustworthiness with customers’ personal items and vehicles.	Co-workers displayed high levels of trust with each other and managers.

**Chinese Sample**

The Chinese sample showed moderate variability in shared organizational values amongst the service workers. Benevolence was manifest in all 3 data types, due in part to the nature of the business. Many customer service organizations instill the value of kindness in the workforce. In this study, it appeared that respondents possessed this value both in professional and personal terms.

The Chinese ranked the highest on Generativity out of the 3 samples. This was expected due to cultural influences and the focus on harmony between the generations. Humanism seemed to come naturally to the employees as they freely shared their relationship-based activities related to their jobs, such as forming groups. Integrity was displayed in terms of honoring commitments made to coworkers or customers. Discussions with managers showed that the businesses valued this characteristic in employees. The responses to the Justice query varied for the Chinese respondents. Many believed that their employers wanted to be fair,

but did not have the actual policies in place to make this happen. One example was a comment by a waitress who never was assigned the weekend shifts, which typically pay more money because of larger tips. When the discussion turned to male versus female treatment, many respondents agreed that men and women were not treated equitably on the job. For example, the principal investigators noticed fewer female managers or supervisors than male managers or supervisors. The employee comments suggested that while women were not prevented from attaining these positions of leadership, men were generally given these roles over women.

Mutuality was the highest ranking value for this sample. A sense of community was evident even when employees from several organizations had to coordinate efforts at a large venue for an outdoor theater performance. Teamwork was the preferred method of operation on most shifts as noted by observation. Small teams were typical, usually composed of 2-10 people. Receptivity was manifest both on the job and outside of the workplace, as seen by co-workers taking breaks together. In most cases, the workplaces were staffed by native Chinese, with few other nationalities represented. However, a number of respondents commented on the increasing diversity of geographic locations represented by their coworkers. Respect did not rank high in the surveys, but it was obvious in the interviews and observations that the employees showed much respect for the elderly and the customers. This finding may have been the result of modesty on the part of the Chinese workers. Responsibility was the lowest ranking value for this group. Perhaps associations with Communist practices influenced the respondents' views on this concept.

Trust was exhibited by employees who offered to watch children while a customer ran an errand. Other respondents expressed confidence in levels of trust in their managers and co-workers. Thus, the qualitative analysis techniques used here allow for a rich consideration of the Chinese service workers' perceptions and values.

### *Costa Rica Sample*

Table 4 includes the list of participants from Costa Rica. Table 5 includes the Costa Rican Values Analysis.

**Table 4**  
**Respondent Descriptions and Coding Costa Rica Sample**

RESPONDENT	GENDER	POSITION	AGE
CR1	M	DRIVER	20S
CR2	F	SECRETARY	30S
CR3	F	MANAGER	60S
CR4	M	LANDSCAPER	20S
CR5	M	MEDICAL TECH	30S



CR6	F	NURSE	40S
CR7	F	PERSONAL TRAINER	20S
CR8	F	GYM WORKER	20S
CR9	F	FITNESS INSTRUCTOR	20S
CR10	F	SWIMMING INSTRUCTOR	20S
CR11	M	BELLHOP	30S
CR12	M	CONCIERGE	50S
CR13	F	ADMINISTRATOR	40S
CR14	M	ANALYST	40S
CR15	M	COMPUTER TECH	30S
CR16	F	COMPUTER TECH	20S
CR17	M	DRIVER	60S
CR18	F	CHILDCARE WORKER	TEENS
CR19	M	MAINTENANCE	40S
CR20	F	CHILDCARE WORKER	TEENS
CR21	F	MANAGER	50S
CR22	M	AUDITOR	30S
CR23	M	BUSINESS OWNER	40S
CR24	M	SECURITY GUARD	20S
CR25	F	HOUSEKEEPER	40S
CR26	M	SECURITY GUARD	60S
CR27	F	CHEF	30S
CR28	M	WAITER	20S
CR29	F	BARTENDER	40S
CR30	F	CASHIER	20S
CR31	M	TEACHER	30S
CR32	M	DELIVERY DRIVER	20S
CR33	F	NURSE AID	20S
CR34	F	HOSTESS	30S
CR35	M	COOK	40S
CR36	M	MAILMAN	50S
CR37	M	MAILMAN	30S
CR38	F	GOVERNMENT WORKER	60S
CR39	F	GOVERNMENT WORKER	20S
CR40	F	ADMINISTRATOR	30S

**Table 5**  
**Costa Rica Value Analysis**

COSTA RICA SAMPLE			
	OBSERVATION	QUESTIONNAIRE	FOCUS GROUP
BENEVOLENCE	Retail store manager made sure that customer request for a particular item was handled quickly.	Even temperament was an expectation for most employers.	Employees shared gifts of candy from customers with co-workers in break room.

GENERATIVITY	Businesses advertised to handle multi-generational parties.	"It is important for my children and grandchildren to see me at work."	References to family were common in discussions.
HUMANISM	A sick child was given preference seating in order to attain medical help.	References to others were more common than references to self.	"My co-workers make my job worthwhile."
INTEGRITY	Employees adhered to scheduled breaks even though the manager was absent.	"I try to do the right thing."	Employees openly discussed organizational culture with each other and researchers.
JUSTICE	Waiters and waitresses assisted each other when the restaurant was busy.	Employees expressed sentiments of fairness that dominated the workplace.	"We see men and women treated equally at work."
MUTUALITY	Theme park employees worked in pairs to assist guests.	"At my workplace, we accomplish much as a team."	The focus was not on the individual, but rather on the group.
RECEPTIVITY	Experienced employees helped new employee with complicated tasks.	Employees were cordial with employees from other companies in business exchanges.	Working in small teams seemed to facilitate acceptance among employees.
RESPONSIBILITY	Workers enforced the pool hours at the hotel.	"I take my job at the cash register seriously because the company could go out of business if I do not."	Discussions about workplace safety showed responsibility among employees.
RESPECT	Tour guide took customers to certain gift shops to show mutual respect.	"Respect is an important part of being a professional."	Newer employees yielded the floor to experienced employees for comments.
TRUST	Theme park workers gained customers' trust during a zip line tour.	"I trust my manager to make good decisions."	No respondents expressed any concerns about trust on the job.

In the Costa Rican sample, there was strong evidence of similar interpretation of most values on the part of the hotel employees consistently across the respondents. This may be the result of strong corporate cultures in the small, tourist-focused country. Of all of the regions studied, this region had the most evidence of cooperation and communication amongst service workers through mentions of trade associations and job-related organizations.

Benevolence was exhibited by participants on a formal level rather than an informal level on several occasions. Many professional courtesies were extended to guests having special functions within the industries, such as birthday

celebrations and wedding receptions at hotels and resorts. Some employees cited the company motto: “customers first” to clients on the job, and it was reiterated during the interviews. For the workers, generativity focused on connections between all generations, to include the current generation in the workforce as well as its predecessors and successors. This was evidenced by the employees who brought family members to the job site, either children or elderly parents. In some smaller businesses, these family members also worked for the employer. In this sample, the humanism value was often referred to in a distant sense. One example noted on the survey is the common phrase in Costa Rica known as “pura vida.” This term has several translations, which came up during the interviews. Some respondents said the translation into English was “pure life,” while others said it meant “full of life” or “this is living.” This sentiment was known by all of the respondents and seen as a positive reflection of Costa Rican culture.

Integrity was seen as a personal value for many employees. They felt personally responsible for matching their words and actions. This value was evident when an employee left surveys with another employee when he had to leave early. Justice was consistently expressed as an ideal but not yet achieved state among many respondents. It was the lowest value on the 5 point scale for this group. They expected their workplace to be fair but few perceived that it was. The most common sentiment was that upper classes and managers received benefits that were not available to the lower classes or average workers. Respondents did not have significant comments when asked about male versus female equality, indicating that this was not a major issue at work. Mutuality was seen as the mutual relationships amongst the employees as well as the relationships between the employees and the customers. The receptivity value took on several different meanings among the workers. For some, it represented acceptance of guests, whereas for others it represented an acceptance of themselves among co-workers.

Respect was understood to be respect for customers as well as respect for superiors or colleagues. This value was strongly evident in the larger society, with its emphasis on a rich landscape, environmentalism and respect for all life forms.

Responsibility was primarily viewed as duties on the job. Some examples that came up repeatedly were safety requirements for operating moving vehicles. This value also manifest as a duty to fellow co-workers. For example, one respondent noted that she felt responsible for repaying a colleague for the time that the colleague had filled in for her to take care of personal business. Trust was described as an expectation on the job, and this sample scored the highest on this value. None of the respondents had negative comments about trust. Therefore, the Costa Rican participants showed a range of interpretations of workplace values. The qualitative inquiry method allowed for follow-up and clarification of their beliefs.

### ***United States Sample***

Table 6 includes the list of participants from the United States. Table 7 includes the United States Values Analysis.

**Table 6**  
**Respondent Descriptions and Coding United States Sample**

RESPONDENT	GENDER	POSITION	AGE
US1	M	COOK	60S
US2	F	RETAIL SALES	30S
US3	M	BANKER	20S
US4	F	SEAMSTRESS	50S
US5	F	PHONE OPERATOR	TEENS
US6	M	SANITATION	50S
US7	F	OFFICE HELPER	20S
US8	M	CONSTRUCTION	30S
US9	F	HAIRDRESSER	50S
US10	F	ACCOUNTANT	30S
US11	M	BANKER	30S
US12	F	BANKER	40S
US13	M	RETAIL SALES	30S
US14	F	RETAIL SALES	20S
US15	F	COUNSELOR	60S
US16	F	COUNSELOR	50S
US17	F	CHILDCARE	TEENS
US18	M	POLICE	30S
US19	M	POLICE	20S
US20	M	SECURITY OFFICER	50S
US21	F	ENGINEER	40S
US22	M	ENGINEER	30S
US23	F	ADMINISTRATOR	30S
US24	M	PRINCIPAL	40S
US25	F	TEACHER	40S
US26	F	TEACHER'S AIDE	50S
US27	M	JANITOR	40S
US28	M	LANDSCAPER	30S
US29	M	AUTO TECH	40S
US30	M	AUTO TECH	30S
US31	F	MAID	20S
US32	F	WAITRESS	20S
US33	F	BARTENDER	30S
US34	M	MANAGER	20S
US35	F	BUSINESS OWNER	30S
US36	M	DRIVER	50S
US37	F	RETAIL CLERK	40S
US38	F	MILITARY PERSONNEL	30S
US39	M	MILITARY PERSONNEL	30S
US40	F	DATA ENTRY	20S

**Table 7**  
**United States Values Analysis**

UNITED STATES SAMPLE			
VALUE	OBSERVATION	QUESTIONNAIRE	FOCUS GROUP
BENEVOLENCE	Worker helped guest locate relative living in the area.	Employees donate sick leave for one who ran out.	"I am friendly with my colleagues. My best friends are my coworkers."
GENERATIVITY	Hotel offered local historical information.	Experienced employees mentor newer employees.	"I try to show the newer employees how to serve guests professionally."
HUMANISM	Hotel participated in recycling program on water saving.	Employees participated in charity function.	"We collect money for charity."
INTEGRITY	Employee told guests not to use broken gym equipment.	Employee did not take extra complementary time awarded to them.	"Honesty is very important to me."
JUSTICE	Employees had 1st come 1st serve policy on food and drink during breaks.	Full time and part time workers wanted the same benefits.	"We are all treated the same at work."
MUTUALITY	Hotels called local hotels for lodging when they were full.	Many employees belong to local trade association.	"We are part of the tourism community. We work with others."
RECEPTIVITY	All guests greeted in the same way.	Weight loss support groups met on premises.	"All ages, genders and races are included."
RESPECT	Guests with small children were given rollaway beds, cribs.	Disabled and handicapped employees and workers had accommodations.	"We respect everyone."
RESPONSIBILITY	Groundskeepers completed jobs out of site of guests.	Employee would not let children use the pool unsupervised.	"I can cover the night shift if my co-worker needs to be off."
TRUST	Worker watched children for guests at daycare camp.	Employee delivered a paycheck for another one.	"My shift leader took on the role of manager when my manager had to leave the premises for an emergency."

The U. S. sample showed the greatest variation in values ratings among the service employees. This is likely the result of the diversity of the population. Benevolence was expressed in this sample on a personal level. One employee was observed helping a guest locate a relative who lived in the local vicinity. Another worker commented that he donated sick leave to a co-worker who had exhausted this benefit. Generativity was seen in experienced employees who mentored newer employees on the job and during personal time before and after shifts. However,

this value ranked the lowest for the sample, perhaps relating to the concepts of individualism and short-term time orientation discussed by Hofstede and Hofstede (2005). Humanism was evident through camaraderie in forms such as company baseball teams and charity fundraisers. Some employees spoke eagerly about an annual run/walk that they participated in as a team to raise money for charity. Integrity was a value displayed to varying degrees by employees. In one example, an employee notified a customer about faulty exercise equipment, so that the customer would not get hurt.

A quote that summarizes the prevailing sentiment regarding the justice value was “We are all treated the same at work.” Some of the Americans interpreted justice in gender terms but some of them interpreted this value in terms of equitable work. Mutuality was often expressed via the local community. In the interviews, employees stated that they were members of a business association that met regularly with other service workers. Mutuality was also observed when restaurant employees would call other restaurants in a friendly gesture to find space for potential guests when the restaurant was full.

In terms of receptivity, respondents made an effort to treat all customers the same way. This sample scored the highest on the receptivity value. Employees pointed to corporate language that reinforced the concept of accepting others in a diverse environment. Respect was observed when employees assisted customers who were disabled or handicapped. Accommodations such as large elevators, ramps and large bathrooms with handlebars and phones were evidence of this value on the part of managers. Gym employees showed responsibility by not allowing children under the age of 18 to swim in the pool alone. A quote from a janitor that related to trust and responsibility was “my shift leader took on the role of the manager when my manager had to leave the premises for an emergency.” The U.S. employees were very willing to talk about their own values and the values in their workplaces. Group consensus took longer to achieve in the interviews than individual comments.

Therefore, across the 3 samples, using the 3 different methods of data collection allowed for a holistic approach to worker perceptions of workplace values. These observations and comments provide insights into the service workers’ sentiments, which could not be gained from pure quantitative analysis alone. Hence, the qualitative analysis techniques utilized provide a rich information base upon which to study the service workers’ perceptions, values and behaviors on the job.

## **6. Discussion**

Common workplace values have become a critical part of organizational culture and organizational success. In this study, the samples demonstrate evidence of each of the 10 values that make up the Values Framework of Jurkiewicz and Giacalone (2004). Yet, there was some divergence in the ways that the workers displayed the values, supporting the findings of White (2006). In each sample, the employees’ value interpretations vary. To illustrate, some interpreted the value of justice on the basis of gender, while others interpreted the value of justice on the

basis of legality. The respondents showed varying definitions of the values. For some, justice was an individual concept and for others, it was a team concept. The employees showed differing levels of commitment to each value. Some felt that trust was an absolute ultimatum, regardless of the situation. Others communicated that trust was important, but it was situation dependent. Also, the workers demonstrated that the values can be considered in different contexts; certain values applied to family, and additional values applied to business.

Several participants showed a more personal commitment to a value, while others demonstrated a more professional commitment to a value. Some organizations reiterated values through their mission statements, while others did not. Some managers' management styles reinforced the issues of workplace values directly, yet other managers addressed this issue indirectly. Culture played a role in the manifestation of workplace values. In China, the respondents showed a preference towards collectivism and group success. While in the United States, they demonstrated a tendency toward individualism and individual success. In Costa Rica, the participants exhibited traditional gender roles, embodying the masculinity-femininity dichotomy. The Costa Rican workers displayed pride in their strong cultural heritage. The Americans showed more interest in innovation and technology. The Chinese employees were focused on efficiency and effectiveness on the job. These employees seemed to be more task oriented, while the Costa Ricans and Americans seemed to be more relationship oriented. The Americans showed less desire for managerial direction, while the Costa Ricans and Chinese expressed the need for supervision and guidance. These findings correlate with many of Hofstede and Hofstede's (2005) cultural dimension classifications for each country.

The respondents showed evidence of behaviors, statements, and work outcomes to support the Values Framework. This was an expected result of the study. Yet, as the research progressed, several themes emerged. The themes of self-expression, cooperation and loyalty were revealed. The groups illustrated the importance of self-expression both personally and professionally. This theme was evident in the evaluation of the values of benevolence, generativity, humanism and respect. In each sample, participants added their personal touch or flair on their work tasks and communications. The cooperation theme was manifest in the observations and discussions of the mutuality, trust and receptivity values. Collaborative efforts in each workplace highlighted the employees' desire for mutual benefits. The loyalty theme was alluded to through the values of justice, responsibility and integrity. Employees were loyal to their co-workers and to their employers. These emergent themes will allow for interesting follow up studies in this area.

## **7. Conclusions**

This research provides evidence of the importance of workplace values for service workers. The respondents demonstrate that positive workplace outcomes depend on employees understanding and living the values of their employer. We believe that similar values are equally as important in other industries. Thus, managers must recognize, model and reward the values of their organizations

for employees. In this way, the workforce will be using workplace values to their greatest advantage in order to maximize company performance. The results lay a foundation for other scholars in additional studies. The limitations of this research include a small sample size and lack of statistical analysis. We plan to build upon this exploratory piece, and incorporate some of these concerns into related studies. Some possible directions for future research include reproducing the study in additional nations, including quantitative analysis, enlarging the sample size, and enhancing the evaluation on cultural dimensions.

A few managerial implications emerge from the findings. First, workers exhibit some values more strongly than others; thus managers should be aware of positive value manifestation, as it may be linked to job satisfaction and other worker attitudes. Conversely negative value manifestation may be linked to job dissatisfaction and other negative job outcomes. Nonetheless, managers should ensure that employees' personal values do not conflict with organizational values. This mismatch can be addressed via selection and training and development. Additionally, employee input regarding periodic training related to organizational values is suggested. Furthermore, managers should regularly examine worker values via both formal and informal mechanisms as values may change based upon internal or external events. Managers may benefit from understanding the influence of culture on value expression at work. Perez-Floriano et al. (2007) found that in a five country study, employees' trust in management was related to job satisfaction. Therefore, it would be wise for managers to examine how employees' cultural backgrounds impact their perceptions of workplace values. Ullman and Ravlin (1993) suggest that employers conduct organization-wide value profile analyses to determine which values are important in different divisions or units within a company. Their work links employee values to job satisfaction, organizational commitment and performance on the job. Thus there is a role that management initiatives can play in order to influence workplace beliefs and attitudes. Kolodinsky, Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2008) note that a match among individual employee values and organizational values will combine to produce workers feeling more involved in their jobs.

Managers should investigate the relationships between these ideas and values among their subordinates in order to maximize productivity in their workplaces. By regularly communicating with employees about the topics of workplace values and culture, managers can create a comfortable environment where employees and customers achieve success.

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