

stance, Nigerian work groups must be comprised of members of the same tribe, for it would be extremely unfavorable to have a person from another tribe in a position of authority. In the Hindu caste system of India, people are born into specific castes to which they and their descendants are bound for life. Within a caste are subcastes, so that Hindu Indian society is both horizontal and vertical. People's caste determines what professions or trades they may engage in, whom they may marry, where they may live, and even which types of traditional clothing they may wear.

In many cultures, status is ascribed, although in societies where there is vertical movement among social classes, becoming a member of a certain profession can confer a high status. In Asian cultures, for instance, teaching is a highly respected and well-rewarded profession; in Latin American cultures, engineering is a high-status profession. Pursuing a religious vocation often confers high status in societies worldwide and can be a means of moving to a higher social class.

High/Low Power Distance

Power distance is the term used to refer to how widely an unequal distribution of power is accepted by the members of a culture. It pertains to the degree in which the less powerful members of a society accept their inequality in power and consider it the norm (Hofstede, 1980). In cultures with high acceptance of power distance (e.g., India, Brazil, Greece, Mexico, and the Philippines), people are not viewed as equals, and everyone has a clearly defined or allocated place in the social hierarchy. In cultures with low acceptance of power distance (e.g., Finland, Norway, New Zealand, and Israel), people believe inequality should be minimal, and a hierarchical division is viewed as one of convenience only. In these cultures, there is more fluidity within the social hierarchy, and it is relatively easy for individuals to move up the social hierarchy based on their individual efforts and achievements.

High/Low Uncertainty-Avoidance

Uncertainty-avoidance is defined as the degree to which a culture feels threatened by certain situations (Hofstede, 1980). Providing stability, structure, and security through formal rules and exhibiting a higher level of anxiety, stress, and aggressiveness are characteristic of cultures with high

levels of uncertainty-avoidance (e.g., Germany, Greece, and Japan). Cultures with high levels of uncertainty-avoidance and low acceptance of power distance tend to be less rigid, more receptive to notions of the individual and of individual success or failure, and less bound to inflexible social roles and to expectations regarding social roles. Cultures with low levels of uncertainty-avoidance (e.g., Scandinavian countries, the United States, and the Netherlands) feature risk-takers, flexibility, tolerance, and relaxed people who prefer as few rules as possible. Cultures with low levels of uncertainty-avoidance and high acceptance of power distance tend to be conservative, with distinct ascribed social roles and strict expectations regarding the enactment of those roles.

Sex Roles and Gender

Each society has its own definition of what is female and what is male; in other words, each culture assigns certain characteristics, types of behavior, and social roles and expectations to women and men. In many instances, there is no genetic or biologically determined basis for these determinations; although “mother” and “father” are biological distinctions, “female work” and “male work” are not. Enculturation and socialization are gender-specific (Boudreau et al., 1986), as well as culturally determined. Role expectations are influenced by prevailing cultural norms; as part of the enculturation process of childhood, children learn to adopt the attributes of social roles and to meet the culture’s or subculture’s expectations of these social roles.

Gender is perhaps the greatest cultural divide. Equality of the sexes continues to be an unusual value in the world. Gender determines what men and women may consider as realistic role enactments. Children learn at an early age to distinguish how male and female roles differ. Their impressions serve as a lens as to how interaction with both sexes will be carried on in their culture. In Japan, China, Korea, and other countries that trace their influences to Confucianism, the father ranks first in everything that happens in society. In Arab societies, male children have traditionally been favored over female children because men contribute more to the family’s influence in the community (Nydell, 1987).

Children of families who immigrate to North America are often affected by a conflict between the societal roles of the family’s home culture and those of their new culture. Their family’s home culture may value ed-