CASE 6-1
Cultural Considerations in International Marketing

This teaching note was prepared by Professor James B. Stull of San Jose State University.

While this simulation was originally designed for a consumer behavior course, the author has subsequently used it successfully in teaching courses in international marketing, marketing channels, and managing the multicultural work force.

Some instructors have wondered how they could manage to cover all of the theory necessary in a given course and still be able to use such a time-consuming exercise. Lectures may be abbreviated to allow time for application of the principles covered; examinations and papers may reflect learning experiences from the simulation. The simulation may be monitored by the instructor to ensure that additional points are included and rules of international marketing are followed.

The cultural components/variables researched by students are covered in depth in Vern Terpstra's *The Cultural Environment of International Business*, First Edition (South-Western Publishing Co.); the second edition deletes the coverage of the legal environment of international business.

The five cultures presented in Exhibit 1 parallel real cultures; however, to avoid stereotyping or insulting anyone from those real cultures, these fictitious cultures/countries have been used. Students immediately make the real culture connections and know exactly where to go for more information on how to conduct business during the simulation.

Students take the simulation seriously, often wearing special clothing to class, displaying artifacts or lighting candles to indicate that it is appropriate to conduct business during that time. They often designate certain nonverbal behavior as favorable or culturally a taboo. The frustrations of international business become real to them; during debriefing, though, students are able to laugh at their cross-cultural blunders.

Student feedback is generally favorable, as students like simulations. They find the simulation to be:

a) practical--they are able to apply theoretical principles in an environment much like the real world,

b) risk free--they are able to experiment with cross-cultural behavior and international marketing without the penalties of the real world, and

c) enjoyable--they find this alternative learning style to be a refreshing change from tradition and a great deal of fun.