

Moralism-Pragmatism

A useful dimension for comparing groups on their approach to reality testing is an adaptation of England's (1975) moralism-pragmatism dimension. In his study of managerial values, England found that managers in different countries tended to be either *pragmatic*, seeking validation in their own experience, or *moralistic*, seeking validation in a general philosophy, moral system, or tradition. For example, he found that Europeans tended to be more moralistic, whereas Americans tended to be more pragmatic. If we apply this dimension to the basic underlying assumptions that a group makes, we can specify different bases for defining what is true, as shown in Exhibit 7.2.

This dimension not only highlights the basis on which truth is determined but also can be related to "uncertainty avoidance," a major dimension found in Hofstede's survey-based cross-national study, and to "tolerance for ambiguity," an important dimension that came out of post-World War II research (Hofstede, 2001; Adorno and others, 1950). Managers and employees in different countries and in different companies vary in the degree to which they share a certain level of comfort with varying degrees of uncertainty and ambiguity. As environments become more turbulent and organizations become more technically complex, the ability of leaders to tolerate uncertainty will become more necessary for survival and learning, suggesting that organizational and national cultures that can embrace uncertainty more easily will be inherently more adaptive (Michael, 1985).

This discussion can be summarized best by showing how it applies to our two cases. DEC had both high consensus that reality was defined by