Exploring the Dimensions of Culture: Global Negotiation and Public Relations in Mexico

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ABSTRACT. The purpose of this study is to explore how the dimensions of Mexican culture affect negotiation in Mexico, including the relationship between negotiation and public relations and the implications on the practice of public relations in Mexico. A major finding is that Mexican negotiators are competitive in negotiation situations despite the collective nature of Mexican society. Therefore, public relations practitioners should consider all of the dimensions of culture when negotiating in Mexico. *[Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <getinfo@haworthpressinc.com> Website: <http://www.HaworthPress.com> © 2002 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]*

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PURPOSE

Virtually every business today has global interests, which means that virtually all public relations is global (J. Grunig, 1994, p. 5). Public relations practi-

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tioners face many cultural issues in the global marketplace. Many practitioners and researchers have recently noted the impact of globalization on public relations. For example: "Public relations is growing explosively in Latin America" (J. R. Sharlach, personal communication, November 30, 1999); "Global thinking is critical to public relations practitioners" (J. Grunig, 1994, p. 3); and "Negotiation is one of the single most important global business skills" (Adler, 1997, p. 191). These comments highlight the importance of negotiation for global public relations practitioners, especially in Latin America.

A key component of global public relations is negotiation. In cross-cultural situations, public relations practitioners often have to negotiate with publics and organizations about concerns, problems, and issues. Global public relations managers must develop their negotiation skills to more effectively participate in the global business world. An essential characteristic of global managers is the ability to build cross-cultural understanding between an organization and its publics.

The purpose of this study is to explore how the dimensions of Mexican culture affect negotiation in Mexico, and negotiation with people from Mexico. In addition, the implications of cross-cultural negotiation for public relations practitioners will be reviewed. This article will address cultural themes practitioners may face in negotiations with publics in Mexico. The major research question explored is: How should public relations practitioners utilize knowledge about Mexican culture when negotiating in Mexico?

To answer this question, the relationship between negotiation and public relations, Mexican culture, Mexican and global negotiation tactics, and the implications on the practice of public relations in Mexico will be reviewed. Answers to these questions may assist public relations practitioners with information about Mexican culture that may help them more effectively communicate and negotiate with members of the Mexican culture.

This article also seeks to add to the small body of knowledge that exists about public relations and negotiation in Mexico by filling a void in scholarly literature on this topic. Although the literature that documents international negotiation styles is growing (Lewicki, Saunders, and Minton, 1999), much of the research related to global negotiation has focused most, but not only, on the Pacific Rim (Cai and Drake, 1998). The amount of scholarly literature about negotiation and public relations in Mexico is still quite small (Adler, Graham, and Gehrke, 1987; Husted, 1994, 1996; Moran and Stripp, 1991; Natlandsmyr and Rognes, 1995; Weiss, 1990).

Conversely, the amount of literature about Mexico in the business environment significantly increased after the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was signed in 1992. The majority of the articles about business in Mexico were "how-to" articles, including "tips" or "dos and don'ts" written by

business professionals (e.g., for entrepreneurs, Applegate, 1997) and human resource specialists (Flynn, 1994; Jarvis, 1990; O'Grady, 1995). In the late 1990s, communication practitioners and scholars contributed to this growing body of knowledge about Mexico, specifically related to business (e.g., Dresser and Berain, 1998; Foster, 1996; Geddie, 1999; Martin, 1997; Natella, 1997; Tebeaux, 1999).

NEGOTIATION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

The Relationship

The role of negotiation in the practice of public relations was rarely discussed in the past (Gossen and Sharp, 1987) but has greatly increased in the past few years (for review, see J. Grunig and L. Grunig, 1992; Huang, 1997; Plowman, 1995; Plowman et al., 1995; Vasquez, 1996). Recently, public relations literature has described the importance of understanding theories of negotiation, conflict management, dispute resolution, and mediation in the practice of excellent public relations (J. Grunig and L. Grunig, 1992). Because public relations is the "management of communication between an organization and its publics" (J. Grunig and Hunt, 1984, p. 6), communication is an essential component of public relations.

Communication is also an important part of negotiation. According to Putnam and Roloff (1992), "Communication and negotiation are inherently intertwined" (p. 2). As defined by J. Grunig and L. Grunig (1992), the two-way symmetrical model of public relations shares similar presuppositions with negotiation and conflict management theories. Thus, negotiation is relevant and important for public relations practitioners to understand.

Negotiation centers on perceived incompatibilities and employs "strategies and tactics aimed at reaching a mutually acceptable agreement" (Putnam and Roloff, 1992, p. 3). Organizations need public relations for many reasons (e.g., to prevent a boycott, strike, or litigation)–situations in which negotiation is often necessary. According to Lewicki et al. (1999), "Negotiations occur for one of two reasons (1) to create something new that neither party could do on his or her own, or (2) to resolve a problem or dispute between parties" (p. 5). In public relations, this is especially true when an organization's publics have a problem with the organization or when dealing with an activist public.

There is a relationship between the two major types of negotiation and the symmetrical and asymmetrical models of public relations. The two-way symmetrical model is related to integrative negotiation strategies or the mutual-gains approach to negotiation because it is collaborative in nature.

Integrative negotiation aims to "reconcile the interests of both parties, reach joint benefits, or attain 'win-win' goals through open information exchange and joint decision making" (Putnam, 1990, p. 3). In contrast, distributive negotiation (like the two-way asymmetrical model of public relations) aims to "maximize self payoffs or to win by promoting one's own objectives as desirable, necessary, or inevitable" (p. 5). Distributive negotiation is used to attain "win-lose" goals (Lewicki et al., 1999).

Negotiation, like public relations, is often practiced in mixed-motive situations using both integrative and distributive negotiation tactics (both two-way symmetrical and asymmetrical tactics are used in public relations). Negotiation scholars suggest that most negotiation situations are mixed-motive in nature. Lewicki et al. (1999) said, "Purely integrative or purely distributive situations are rare" (p. 136).

Fisher and Ury (1991) suggested that negotiators should begin the negotiation process using distributive tactics and use more and more integrative tactics as the negotiation process progresses. Others believe that negotiators should begin by using attitudinal structuring to assess the situation and choose the bargaining strategy that is most appropriate. Attitudinal structuring, is the "process of adjusting attitudes according to the behavior of the other party in an attempt to bring negotiation into a more distributive or integrative type of negotiating" (Dr. Deborah Cai, personal communication, September 20, 1999). If the situation appears open, integrative tactics (symmetrical model in public relations) should be attempted. If not, distributive tactics (asymmetrical model in public relations) could be used. In the "real world" a combination of integrative and distributive tactics is useful.

THE EXCELLENCE STUDY AND GLOBAL PUBLIC RELATIONS

The results of the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) Excellence Study further illustrated the importance and relevance of negotiation knowledge for public relations practitioners (Dozier, L. Grunig, and J. Grunig, 1995). Negotiation knowledge was one of four major areas of knowledge (negotiation, strategic and operational management, research, and persuasion) identified by the Excellence Study that communication departments need for excellence. Dozier et al. said, "These areas permit communicators to play the manager role and engage in two-way practices" (p. 63). Negotiation includes three areas of specialized expertise: negotiation with an activist public; helping management to understand the opportunities of particular publics; and, using theories of conflict resolution in dealing with publics.

These negotiation skills help public relations practitioners build long-term relationships, which are essential in public relations.

The Excellence Study found strong evidence that public relations makes organizations more effective when it "builds quality, long-term relationships with strategic publics" (Dozier et al., 1995; J. Grunig, 1992; J. Grunig and L. Grunig, 1998; J. Grunig and Huang, 2000). Specifically, the Excellence Study defined and described ten generic principles that are necessary to practice excellent public relations. The ten generic principles are: (1) involvement of public relations in strategic management, (2) empowerment of public relations in the dominant coalition or a direct reporting relationship to senior management, (3) integrated public relations function, (4) public relations as a management function separate from other functions, (5) the public relations unit headed by a manager rather than a technician, (6) two-way symmetrical/mixed-motive model of public relations, (7) symmetrical system of internal communication, (8) a department with the knowledge needed to practice the managerial role and symmetric public relations, (9) diversity embodied in all roles, and (10) ethics and social responsibility. The generic principles have implications for global public relations.

To better understand the practice of global public relations, Vercic, L. Grunig, and J. Grunig (1993) began to develop a global theory of public relations (J. Grunig, 1994). Essentially, they extended the generic principles to global public relations (L. Grunig, J. Grunig, and Vercic, 1998; Vercic, L. Grunig, and J. Grunig, 1993, 1996; Wakefield, 2001). They hypothesized that the generic principles would apply across cultures and political/economic systems (J. Grunig, 1994, p. 22).

The result of Vercic et al.'s (1996) research suggested that the most effective way to practice excellent public relations globally is to use "generic principles" with "specific applications." To apply the generic principles five specific variables must be studied within the culture in which the principles will be applied: (1) societal culture, (2) political/economic system, (3) the extent and nature of activism, (4) the level of development, and (5) the media system (J. Grunig, 1994, p. 43).

For the purpose of this article, one of the roles of strategic global public relations practitioners is to act as negotiators with the identified Mexican publics. Practitioners must become familiar with the Mexican people and their culture before attempting to effectively negotiate with them. After all, according to Phatak and Habib (1999), "the negotiator's cultural background has perhaps, the most profound impact on the negotiation process" (p. 383). Therefore, Americans need to learn about the Mexican negotiators' cultural background.

MEXICAN CULTURE

Historical and Demographic Factors

A famous quote from Porfirio Díaz, Mexico's last pre-revolutionary president, illustrates the relationship between Mexico and the United States. He said, "Poor Mexico, so far from God, so near the United States" (as cited in Condon, 1997, p. xiii). Mexico and the United States share a 1,500-mile border that spans the continent, yet they have long had a love-hate relationship (p. 4). Many historical factors have complicated the relationship between these two nations. For example, there is much resentment in Mexico toward the United States for the loss of so much territory in the nineteenth century (Riding, 1985).

Another area of resentment relates to the terms by which people from the United States and Mexico are referred. The formal name of Mexico is the United Mexican States (*Estados Unidos Mexicanos*). Mexican people resent the fact that people in the United States refer to themselves as "Americans" because there are three Americas: North America, Central America, and South America. Some argue that there is also a Middle America (Condon, 1997). I considered calling U.S. citizens "North Americans" but this term lumps people from the United States and Canada together. If I was writing this paper in Spanish I could use the term "*estadounidense*" that literally means "United States-an" but this term does not exist in English. It would be cumbersome to use the phrase "people from the United States" each time I describe U.S. citizens. Therefore, I will use the term "American." I am aware of the possibility that this term may offend some people but this is not my intention.

Mexico has a much longer history than the United States. Some scholars estimate Mexico to be thousands of years old (Condon, 1997). By one estimation, Mexico was inhabited as early as 10,000 B.C. (Merrill and Miró, 1996). Mexico is the third largest nation in Latin America (after Brazil and Argentina) and is expected to have a population of 100 million by 2000. About 90% of the population is Catholic, and more than 50% of the Mexican population is *mestizo* (mixture of Indian and European descent). Other cultural groups are Indian and European. Spanish is the official language of Mexico but there are between 90 (Merrill and Miró, 1996) and 150 (Condon, 1997) other languages spoken in the country.

The Mexican economic system has been unstable since the 1970s; however, the economic situation has improved in recent years. In 1992 Mexico joined the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which has promoted rapid change throughout Mexico (Rugman, 1994). The country is in a major transition phase (Harris and Moran, 1991). This has been especially evident in the global marketplace. In a recent country study of Mexico, Merrill and Miró (1996) said:

> Culturally, politically, and economically, Mexico is a nation undergoing rapid change. Past characterizations of the country as rural, undemocratic, and protectionist have been replaced in the last decades of the twentieth century by descriptions that refer to Mexico as urban, opening to democracy, and market-oriented. (http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/mxtoc.html)

Understanding the history of Mexico and being able to talk about it in business situations is extremely important (Condon, 1997; Kras, 1995; Moran and Stripp, 1991) because it may help Americans gain respect and build relationships with the Mexican people. It is also necessary to understand that Mexico, like the United States, is a diverse nation (Olivé, 1996). As mentioned above, there are various cultural groups in Mexico. In Mexico there is, and has been, a "serious pursuit of the question 'Who is the Mexican?'" (Condon, 1997, p. 5). It is important to be aware that Mexico has as much, if not more, cultural diversity than the United States (Ivan Zavalla, personal communication, February 10, 2000). Therefore, there are many definitions of who Mexicans are and the question remains unanswered.

Culture

Many aspects of the Mexican culture will be discussed in this section, including Hofstede and Halls' dimensions of culture and how Mexican cultural themes relate to these dimensions. There are between 160 (Banks, 1995) and 200 (Dodd, 1998) definitions of culture, including different dimensions and typologies.

Hofstede's Four Dimensions of Culture. Hofstede's (1984) multinational study of four cultural traits provides some insight into Mexican society (Mexico was one of 39 countries studied, in which seven were Latin American countries). He defined culture as "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another" (p. 21). No single person's approach to culture could be perfect, but Hofstede's definition fits my purposes because he provided measurable dimensions of culture. Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism/Collectivism, and Masculinity/Femininity are the four dimensions of culture that Hofstede focused on in his study. In essence, the four dimensions of culture describe different frames of mind or perspectives upon which cultural views are based.

Power distance was the first of four dimensions studied. It refers to the structure of social relationships, e.g., vertical (hierarchical) or horizontal; equal or unequal; as well as, the degree of dependence of subordinates on superiors in the workplace. Mexico had the second highest power distance score (after the Philippines). Mexico has a very hierarchical society (Condon, 1997). Many status hierarchies exist in Mexico: the family, the Church, the State, and the social system, which is characterized by sharp distinctions in economic and educational status (Archer and Fitch, 1994). According to Archer and Fitch, hierarchies are seen as a "logically pervasive aspect of human existence" within Mexican society (p. 87). In other words, hierarchies are accepted within Mexican society. Hierarchies are part of the Mexicans' reality. They exist and affect interactions daily. Americans should understand that in Mexico hierarchies are not viewed so negatively as they are in the United States. The importance of the hierarchical structure is reflected in the power structure, protocol, and formality of Mexican society.

The power structure in Mexican organizations is hierarchical/authoritarian and formal. Status differences are reflected in most Mexican organizations. Status based on family connections, personal or political influence, and education are critical in Mexico (Moran and Stripp, 1991). It is important to be aware of the power of one's status in Mexico because status is very prevalent in the business world. Mexican negotiators are selected primarily on status. They tend to be high level, male, and well-connected (p. 215).

Protocol is another important aspect of the hierarchical and formal structure emphasized in Mexico. Moran and Stripp (1991) said, "Mexican culture is dominated by courtesy, dignity, tact, and diplomacy" (p. 216). Many aspects of Mexican culture are formal, including etiquette, dress, and language. For example, Mexicans avoid the use of first names and use two forms of "you": *usted* (formal) and *tu* (familiar) (p. 216). The formal "you" is used in the business world, especially in contracts. The formal nature of the Mexican culture is also reflected in the concept of *respeto* (respect), which is related to power and status in Mexico (Condon, 1997). For example, a Mexican manager may "command respect by virtue of his position, age, or influence" (p. 22), not necessarily by the manager's experience. Power and status are given to people who have the qualities considered important in Mexico, which may be different than qualities deemed important in the United States and affect the negotiation process.

Americans working with Mexicans should strive to understand the importance of the hierarchical structure in Mexico. Americans must understand that there are cultural differences about the "differences that make a difference" in Mexico (Condon, 1997, p. 37). Two important points to remember: (1) It is not "proper" to minimize certain status differences between people, and (2) people are expected to make a "fuss over persons whose age, rank, or role demand attention in Mexico" (p. 39). If these differences are misunderstood it could negatively affect the negotiation process. For example, minimizing the importance of status in Mexico may insult the Mexican people and hurt business relationships before the negotiation process begins. Americans should respect the importance of status as much as possible when doing business in Mexico.

Uncertainty avoidance was the second dimension studied by Hofstede. Uncertainty avoidance refers to the degree to which one can tolerate ambiguity or the unknown (Hofstede, 1984). Countries with high uncertainty avoidance scores tend to make rules to decrease the amount of "uncertainty" in the environment. Mexico had a relatively high uncertainty avoidance score in Hofstede's study (much higher than that of the United States). Therefore, based on Hofstede's results, organizational loyalty, a preference for a clear hierarchical structure, and group decision making (instead of individual decision making) are important and preferred in the Mexican business environment (Archer and Fitch, 1994; Hofstede, 1984).

The implications of uncertainty avoidance are related to the concept of *fatalismo* (fatalism) in Mexico. Archer and Fitch (1994) explained this relationship well:

> Because of the sense of fatalism or personal lack of control perceived by Latin Americans, the more uncertain one's view of the future, the more one will rely on what one can be certain about: family ties and established kinship ties ensuring loyalty. (p. 82)

Fatalism is very prevalent in Mexican culture and directly related to many aspects of Mexican culture. Mexicans' fatalistic worldview is based on their perceived lack of personal control (Condon, 1997; Kras, 1995; Riding, 1985). They see time as cyclical and all events as "acts of God" (Condon, 1997, p. 4). This fatalistic worldview is also evident in Mexican proverbs, e.g., "submit to pain because it is inevitable" (Zormeier and Samovar, 1997, p. 238) and celebrations such as the Day of the Dead (Condon, 1997).

Mexicans' fatalism may be rooted in the Spanish culture. For example, the cultural metaphor for Spain is the Spanish Bullfight (Gannon and Associates, 1994). Gannon and Associates described Spain's extreme emotions:

> Underlying the outer joy, Spaniards tend to host a deeply ingrained sensitivity to the tragic and an equally strong emotional pull toward the heroic. Perhaps these sentiments more than their love for life, are what have made the bullfight so popular among Spaniards for hundreds of years. (p. 160)

This metaphor is also applicable to Mexico because Spain strongly influenced Mexican culture in its 300 years of rule over Mexico. Mexico shares some of Spain's cultural characteristics, especially the love for life and fatalism. Mexican culture reflects the "cumulation of 450 years of influences of Spanish, Aztec, and Mayan civilizations" (Moran and Stripp, 1991, p. 214).

The future is viewed with a fatalistic attitude in Mexico (Riding, 1985), which affects business practices and negotiation in Mexico. Planning seems "unnatural" to many Mexicans because they believe that events are predestined (p. 6). Therefore, planning and preparation for negotiation may be more important in the United States than they are in Mexico. A Mexican college student (personal communication, February 28, 2000), who has lived and worked in Mexico for more than twenty years, said: "In general, Mexicans do not plan. The Mexican is the king of improvisation. Little planning is done and much improvised action takes place because the Mexican improvises much and organizes little."

The amount of planning and preparation conducted in Mexico may vary by organization, as it does in the United States but, in general, Americans plan more than Mexicans. This tendency may be related to the Mexicans' polychronic time orientation, which will be described in the next section. Therefore, American negotiators should attempt pre-negotiation talks or research to determine the amount of planning and preparation the Mexican negotiators are doing or going to do for the negotiation. The other possibility is to talk to people who have negotiated with the Mexican negotiators in the past to find out how much planning they generally do for negotiations.

The third dimension studied by Hofstede was individualism/collectivism. It describes the "relationship between the individual and the collectivity which prevails in a given society" (Hofstede, 1984, p. 148). Countries with high individualism scores are characterized by personal goals being more important than group goals to the members of society. Self-referent messages are more common, such as "I" instead of "we." There is also a difference in cultural philosophy. For example, individualistic countries value competition more than collaboration or group harmony, which are considered important in collectivist countries. In Hofstede's comparative study, Mexico had one of the lowest scores of individualism, which means that Mexico is considered a very collective society.

The concept of *personalismo* (personal relationships) is related to collectivism and helps explain "the supreme importance of the family" in Mexico (Condon, 1997, p. 25). Personal relationships are an essential component of Mexican life. Families are extended beyond the nuclear family (mom, dad, brother, sister) to include grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. The family takes priority over everything else in life. Family is chosen over work obligations in Mexico, which is not often true in the United States (Condon, 1997; Kras, 1995).

Families are also "extended beyond blood-lines through the institution of *compadrazco,* godfather relationships" (Condon, 1997, p. 27). This practice is very common in Mexico and other Latin American countries (Archer and Fitch, 1994; Moran and Stripp, 1991). Being a godparent in Mexico often means "becoming part of a vast network of relationships" through which advice, loans, and favors are often sought and granted (Condon, 1997, p. 27). As mentioned before, "connections" and "influence" are very important in Mexico and frequently obtained through the family system.

However, the degree of collectivism in Mexico varies based on the social arena (Condon, 1997; Moran and Stripp, 1991). For example, Mexicans tend to be competitive in business negotiation situations despite the collective nature of Mexican society. They often pursue individual goals and needs for their personal recognition (Moran and Stripp, 1991, p. 215). The pursuit of individual goals may be related to *machismo* or the masculine dimension of Mexican culture (see below). In contrast, as mentioned in the discussion of *personalismo*, Mexicans seem to maintain their collective orientation with family and social relationships.

Mexico is different in this respect because the country demonstrates characteristics of both individualism and collectivism (individuality within a collectivist society). However, there is a distinct difference between "individualism" in the United States and "individuality" in Mexico (Condon, 1997, p. 19). In Mexico, the "inner spirit" and the uniqueness of an individual are valued more than individual merits in the United States (p. 18). Words like "soul" and "spirit" (*alma* or *espíritu*) are often used in Mexico. Mexicans think discussing concepts like soul and spirit is part of getting to know someone while Americans often think these concepts are too personal to discuss. Therefore, speaking freely about these concepts may cause conflict or uneasiness between Mexicans and Americans. Mexicans often feel that Americans are unemotional or insensitive, which may explain why some Mexicans say "Americans are corpses!" (p. 55). Americans lack emotion in the eyes of many Mexicans.

The fourth dimension studied by Hofstede was masculinity/femininity. Masculine cultures value strength, assertiveness, competitiveness, making money, and acquiring material possessions. They also differentiate between gender roles more than do feminine cultures (Dodd, 1998). In contrast, feminine cultures tend to accept fluid gender roles. They value relationships, compassion, and quality of life. Mexico had the sixth highest score for masculinity.

Mexico is a masculine and traditional society. Stringent sex roles are still very strong in Mexico although this is slowly changing. According to Condon (1997), "The behavior of men and women is clearly distinguished and there is

a strong social pressure to maintain these distinctions" (p. 32). This concept is described as "machismo" in the Mexican culture.

Machismo is also referred to as "Mexican pride" (Moran and Stripp, 1991). Machismo may have evolved from the Spanish conquest of Mexico (Strong, McQuillen, and Hughey, 1994). A recent study identified eight characteristics of "typical machismo behavior": male dominance, possessiveness, suspicion of infidelity, viewing women as property, conscious acceptance of double standards in sexual behavior, gender-role rigidity, vengefulness, and a constant need for respect (p. 22). According to the Chicano perspective, there are both positive and negative aspects of machismo. Yet, the positive aspects of machismo, e.g., self-respect and responsibility to provide well for one's family, are often ignored and negative stereotypes are perpetuated (p. 20).

When working with Mexicans, Americans should understand that machismo still exists in Mexico and is part of the Mexican culture. Learning about the history of Mexico will help one understand this concept better. Researching this topic may reduce stereotypes or attitudes that Americans may have about Mexican people, especially Mexican men.

In the Mexican business world, Americans must appear strong and competent or they will not be respected (Condon, 1997). They must also be sensitive to any "real or implied messages contrary to Mexican self-esteem" or Mexican pride (Moran and Stripp, 1991, p. 215). This is especially true for women who work in Mexico. According to Monica Herrera (personal communication, November 14, 1999), a Mexican woman who lived and worked as a social worker in Mexico City for almost 30 years, women in Mexico do not receive the same level of respect as men. She suggested that the situation is changing in the metropolitan cities, e.g., Mexico City, and with the younger generations growing up in Mexico. Herrera advised the following to gain respect, power, and status in Mexico:

> Women should speak Spanish, know as much as they can about the Mexican culture, have a strong educational background and the credentials to show for it, and above all, they should have confidence in themselves and be strong.

In Mexico, the Spanish language is an aspect of culture that cannot be overemphasized. Victor (1992) said, "The use of language, for many cultures, symbolizes understanding of or even membership in that culture" (p. 26). Using the language also establishes a "respect and degree of trust" never fully available to those that do not speak the language (p. 26). Therefore, Americans who speak Spanish may achieve a higher "status" in Mexico.

Halls' Concepts of Culture. In addition to Hofstede's cultural dimensions, Hall and Hall (1990) described the importance of communication context and time orientation for understanding culture. They said, "Context involves the information that surrounds an event; it is inextricably bound up with the meaning of that event" (p. 6). In other words, context refers to how much members of a culture are "expected to know about procedures and rules without being told" (Dodd, 1998, p. 89). Context is based on how much information people need about their culture to function. Hall (1997a) said, "In its many forms, culture designates what we pay attention to and what we ignore" (p. 45). Time orientation refers to the ways cultures "process time, information, and communication" (Hall, 1997b). Hall defined two types of cultural orientations–"monochronic" (M-time) and "polychronic" (P-time)–that explain how people organize and structure their lives.

Hall and Hall (1990) compared cultures on a scale from high to low context. No culture is exclusively high context or low context but most tend to be closer to one end of the scale (p. 6). In high-context cultures, like Mexico, information about cultural procedures is not "overly" communicated. High context cultures have "extensive information networks" among family, friends, colleagues, and clients and are involved in close personal relationships (p. 6). They keep themselves informed about everything that has to do with the people who are important in their lives.

The emphasis on personal relationships may explain why Mexico is considered a high-context culture. Members of this type of culture are expected to know what to do; information and cultural rules are implicit. In reference to this concept, Riding (1985) said:

> The Mexicans have no difficulty in understanding each other. They do so through secret codes–the customs, language and gestures–that they learn unconsciously from childhood accepting the consistency of their inconsistencies as part of an established pattern in which they are merely repeating. (p. 3)

In contrast, in low-context cultures information and procedures are explicit. Members of the culture do not make assumptions about what people should know because information and cultural rules are explained. The United States is a low-context culture, which can lead to interesting cultural differences when working with Mexicans. The difference in contexts can have a unique affect on relationships between Mexicans and Americans, as the following example illustrates:

> A Mexican executive–as a member of a high context culture–may feel uncomfortable doing business with a stranger. The Mexican will probably talk on nonbusiness matters for awhile until the stranger's character can adequately be assessed. Knowing one's business partner is *central* to conducting business. (Victor, 1992, p. 159)

In reference to time orientation, monochronic cultures are focused on "doing one thing at a time" and operate in a linear fashion (Hall, 1997b, p. 278). Time is treated as something tangible in cultures with monochronic time orientations. For example, members of the American culture say that time can be "saved" or "wasted." The United States has a monochronic cultural orientation.

In contrast, polychronic cultures are focused on "doing many things at once" (Hall, 1997b, p. 278). Polychronic time is based on a holistic pattern of thought that follows a nonlinear order. Time is treated as less tangible in polychronic cultures compared to monochronic cultures. There is a looser notion of what is "on time" or "late" in polychronic cultures (Condon, 1997, p. 65). Mexico and most Latin American countries are considered polychronic cultures.

The *mañana* (tomorrow) concept in Mexico can be traced back to the Mexican fatalist worldview and is directly related to a polychronic time orientation. *Mañana* is not a symptom of "chronic inefficiency or laziness, but rather evidence of an entirely different philosophy of time" (Riding, 1985, p. 7). In Mexico, punctuality is unimportant; time is an imprecise concept (Condon, 1997; Kras, 1995; Riding, 1985; Moran and Stripp, 1991). Human activities are not expected to "proceed like clockwork" (Condon, 1997, p. 65). From the Mexican perspective, life should be enjoyed in the present because the future is uncertain (Condon, 1997; Kras, 1995; Riding, 1985).

Different cultural time orientations (M-time versus P-time) have the potential to cause intercultural conflicts in negotiation. According to Hall and Hall (1990), "The importance of this basic dichotomy [M-time and P-time] cannot be overemphasized" (p. 17). Cultural adaptation may be necessary for Americans when working with Mexicans because interruptions and delays are common and should be expected (Condon, 1997). Therefore, extra time should be planned when negotiating in Mexico or with Mexicans. Condon advised:

> If it helps, remind yourself [Americans] that the Mexican pattern has its counterparts in cultures on five continents. The American expectations, viewed in a global perspective, are in the minority. (p. 66)

To summarize, Mexico has high power distance, high uncertainty avoidance, high masculinity (low femininity), and low individualism (high collectivism) and is a high-context culture with a polychronic time orientation. This description of the Mexican culture and its many different dimensions provided a foundation for the next section about negotiation tactics, both Mexican and global tactics, and how the dimensions of Mexican culture affect negotiation tactics. The cultural dimensions are discussed throughout the remainder of the study.

NEGOTIATION TACTICS

Mexican Approaches

Mexico is one of the most important trading partners of the United States. However, the literature on negotiations in Mexico is "sparse" (Adler, Graham, and Gehrke, 1987). Therefore, it is important to briefly review the few studies and book chapters that have focused on negotiation in Mexico, explain negotiation tactics commonly used in Mexico, and describe how the cultural dimensions discussed in the previous section influence these tactics. In addition, recently developed global negotiation tactics are reviewed and the implications for global public relations practitioners are discussed.

The following studies examine the negotiation process and outcomes in Mexico in both intra- and intercultural negotiation situations. The results of these studies provide evidence that all of the dimensions of culture are important in negotiation situations and should be considered when negotiating with Mexican people. Each study provides insights about Mexican negotiation tactics and the role that culture plays in negotiation situations. Many conclude that Mexican negotiators are competitive in negotiation situations despite the collective nature of Mexican society.

Adler, Graham, and Gehrke (1987) compared business-negotiation behaviors in the United States to those in Mexico and Canada by examining members of each culture in intracultural negotiation situations. The researchers examined the influence of culture on negotiation. As suggested by the literature about Mexican culture, Adler et al. found that relationships, target satisfaction, interpersonal attraction, and rank were all important to the Mexican negotiators. The Mexican negotiators made a little less profit than the negotiators from the United States and Canada but they achieved higher levels of target satisfaction and interpersonal attraction. The researchers said that target satisfaction and interpersonal attraction are the "key to long-lasting commercial relationships" (p. 424).

In contrast, Adler et al. (1987) concluded that Mexican negotiators used more instrumental strategies (which were also referred to as individualistic strategies) than American and Canadian negotiators. They based their analysis of the bargaining process variables on the representational-instrumental continuum. Adler et al. suggested that representational communication behaviors focus on the "transmission of information," while instrumental communication behaviors focus on "influencing" each other (p. 414). The Mexican negotiators achieved higher profits when they attempted to influence or persuade each other rather than share information (a representational communication behavior is generally assumed to be used by collectivist cultures). Therefore, Mexican negotiators used more competitive strategies in negotiation situations than negotiators from the United States and Canada.

Weiss (1990) studied the process of negotiations involved in the IBM-Mexico agreement on investment in the microcomputer industry. He highlighted the complexity of this negotiation process in Mexico, as well as the importance of authority (specifically, the Mexican government) and interpersonal relationships between negotiators. Weiss concluded that U.S. business people should learn about the hierarchical and authoritarian structure of Mexican society before beginning the negotiation process. In other words, Americans should familiarize themselves with the dimensions of Mexican culture before attempting to negotiate in Mexico.

Husted (1994) examined the nature of negotiations between Mexican and American business people. He found that many of the perceived differences between Mexicans' and Americans' approach to negotiation related to the "typical differences found between high context and low context cultures" (p. 634). The Mexicans' approach to negotiation was less structured than the Americans' approach. Only half of the Mexican negotiators formally prepared for negotiations with the U.S. companies (p. 631). One of the most commonly cited reasons by Mexican negotiators for their lack of preparation was "overconfidence in negotiation skills" (p. 632), which is similar to reasons often cited in the United States (Lewicki et al., 1999). Husted concluded that the "human side" of the negotiation process is more important than the technical aspects to the Mexican business people (p. 642).

Natlandsmyr and Rognes (1995) compared Mexican and Norwegian negotiators to examine the relationship between culture and outcome in contract negotiations and analyzed how negotiation behavior mediates between culture and outcome (p. 5). The researchers predicted that Mexican negotiators would achieve an integrative outcome if collectivism was the most important dimension of culture. Otherwise, they hypothesized that Mexico's high levels of masculinity, uncertainty avoidance and power distance would affect the negotiation process more than collectivism and the Mexican negotiators would use a distributive negotiation process.

They found the latter to be true. Mexican negotiators used a distributive negotiation process without integrative aspects (in intra-cultural negotiation situations, p. 18). Natlandsmyr and Rognes said Mexican negotiators used a distributive negotiation process because the negotiators' final contract was a combination of settlement points at the same level of joint gain (compared to the first offer). Basically, the Mexican negotiators redistributed the benefits between themselves–a distributive process (p. 21). Cultural differences affected the progress of the negotiation process but not the communication tactics used by the Mexican and Norwegian negotiators (p. 23). Therefore, the researchers concluded that collectivism might not be "critical" in one-time contract negotiations. They said, "It may be that the three other dimensions are more important than collectivism in explaining integrativeness, or there may be an interaction effect between these cultural dimensions" (p. 23).

Moran and Stripp's (1991) book, *Dynamics of Successful International Business Negotiations*, includes a chapter about negotiating in Mexico. They outlined the basic concept of the negotiation process in Mexico:

- Negotiating in Mexico is a long and drawn out process, covering several stages. The goal of the first, and most important, stage is to determine if the parties involved can do business together as individuals. According to Moran and Stripp, "Establishing a warm working relationship with one's counterpart is essential, and facilitates negotiation." (p. 214)
- The negotiation process is based on the use of distributive bargaining tactics. Mexicans assume "limited goods" and are competitive at the negotiation table. However, Mexicans are usually skilled at avoiding confrontation and loss of face. (p. 215)

Other important points included: the selection of negotiators based on status, role of individual aspirations, high concern for protocol, significance of relationship-based issues, complexity of the language, nature of persuasive argument, value of time, bases of trust, low risk-taking propensity, internal decision-making systems, and form of satisfactory agreement. Moran and Stripp (1991) concluded that despite the collective nature of Mexico, Mexican negotiators are often competitive and use distributive strategies in negotiation situations. They related this competitive negotiation style to machismo or Mexican pride. Mexican negotiators with a strong sense of Mexican pride do not want to be taken advantage of by an "American gringo"; thus, they are competitive at the negotiation table (p. 215).

The Mexican negotiation style and tactics are commonly used in the Mexican marketplace, as described by Condon (1997):

> A case in point is the kind of bargaining one does at a *tianguis*, the traditional Mexican open air market, or in certain shops. The bargaining back and forth exemplifies interpersonal values in contrast to the fixed-price system, which suits clarity and efficiency to be found in objective values. (p. 45)

In this case, it is very evident that distributive bargaining strategies are commonly used in Mexico, yet relationships are still important. The Mexican marketplace is an "excellent school for business and social relations in Mexico" (p. 45). Americans should take the opportunity to participate and learn from this type of experience in Mexico.

Many of the cultural characteristics described in the previous section were reflected in the Mexican negotiation tactics. The studies reviewed in this section supported the cultural characteristics of Mexico, especially the importance of personal relationships in Mexican culture. Again, the literature suggested that Mexicans value personal relationships (particularly family relationships) more highly than Americans, who are assumed to value business over personal relationships (Kras, 1995). However, Adler et al. (1987), Natlandsmyr and Rognes (1995), and Moran and Stripp (1991) concluded that Mexican negotiators use distributive negotiation strategies despite their collective nature. They said Mexican negotiators, members of a collectivist society, used more individualistic negotiation strategies than expected. They equated individualistic negotiation strategies with distributive strategies. There is ongoing debate about this issue (for review, see Wilson, Cai, Campbell, Donohue, and Drake, 1995).

Some communication scholars have argued that "a value dimension such as individualism-collectivism should not exert substantial main effects on either intracultural or intercultural negotiations" (Wilson et al., 1995, p. 224). A more complex view of these concepts may need to be adopted because one cannot assume that collectivist cultures, like Mexico, will make more concessions for "group harmony" (p. 229). All of the dimensions of culture studied by Hofstede may interact in negotiation situations as Natlandsmyr and Rognes (1995) suggested. They found evidence that masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, and power distance may be "more important" than collectivism or there may be an "interaction" between all of them (p. 23). Therefore, Mexico's high level of masculinity, power distance and uncertainty avoidance may be more influential in the negotiation process than its collective nature. Based on the assumption that the four dimensions of culture have the same degree of importance, three of the four dimensions would support and explain why Mexicans use distributive negotiation tactics despite the collective nature of their society.

The studies described in this section supported the finding about the importance of all four dimensions of culture. The researchers concluded that Mexicans have a high level of concern for relationships, which is indicative of collectivist cultures; yet, distributive negotiation tactics were used more frequently than integrative negotiation tactics. Therefore, individualism-collectivism may not be the best dimension of culture to refer to when selecting strategies for intercultural negotiation situations. Americans must realize that Mexicans use distributive negotiation strategies, not just those deemed "appropriate" for collectivist cultures. Thus, it may be more useful to explore all four dimensions of culture and how they interact with each other before making decisions about negotiation.

Global negotiation tactics are explored in the next section and offer negotiators strategies for intercultural/global negotiation situations. These strategies can help negotiators explore all of the dimensions of culture before making negotiation-related decisions. They have specific implications for Americans negotiating with Mexicans.

Global Negotiation Tactics

Recently, scholars and practitioners in business, communication, and negotiation (Copeland and Griggs, 1984; Foster, 1992; Harris and Moran, 1991; Phatak and Habib, 1996; Weiss, 1994a, 1994b; Victor, 1992) have written about global business with a focus on negotiation and bargaining cross-culturally.

Weiss (1994a, 1994b) developed "global" strategies for international/intercultural negotiations in an article called *Negotiating with the Romans*. He presented a range of eight "culturally responsive strategies" for Americans and other groups involved in cross-cultural negotiations. His framework was based on the parties' level of familiarity with each other's cultures and the extent to which they could explicitly coordinate their strategies (1994a, p. 51). In this case, the framework is based on the American negotiator's level of familiarity or knowledge about the Mexican culture.

The eight culturally responsive strategies proposed by Weiss (1994a) are described based on the negotiator's level of familiarity with the other party's culture–low, moderate, or high. If there is low familiarity with the counterpart's culture there are three possible culturally responsive strategies from which the practitioners can choose (pp. 54-55). The first option for the negotiator is to employ an agent or adviser (e.g., a cultural expert or translator) who

has a moderate or high level of knowledge about both cultures. The second option is to involve a mediator who acts as a third party to "facilitate" interaction between the two cultures. The third option is to induce the counterpart to follow one's own script. Specifically, Americans try to persuade (implicitly or explicitly) their Mexican counterparts to follow an American model of negotiation (p. 55).

If there is moderate familiarity with the counterpart's culture two additional strategic options are available to the negotiators (pp. 55-56). The first option (overall, this is the fourth option) is to adapt to the counterpart's script, meaning the Americans would follow the Mexican model of negotiation. The next option is for the Americans to coordinate adjustment of both parties. In this situation Americans would develop a joint approach for discussions, e.g., to negotiate the process of negotiation (p. 56).

If there is high familiarity with the counterpart's culture there is at least one, and possibly, two more strategies available (pp. 56-58). First (overall, this is the sixth option), the negotiator has the option to embrace the counterpart's script. The Americans could agree to use the negotiation approach most typical of the Mexican culture. Second, the negotiator has the option to improvise the approach. The Americans could have a plan in mind but change (or improvise) it throughout the negotiation process based on the Mexican negotiators' responses. Finally, the last option for the negotiator is to effect symphony–"an effort by the negotiator to get both parties to transcend exclusive use of either home culture by exploiting their high familiarity capabilities" (p. 58). "Effect symphony" is also considered creating a "third culture" or negotiator subculture. The negotiators could create their own culture for negotiating purposes.

These strategies offer cross-cultural negotiators many options. A global public relations practitioner should take these strategies into account when negotiating with Mexican organizations and publics. For example, public relations practitioners with a low level of familiarity of the Mexican culture should employ a "cultural interpreter" to translate the culture for the practitioner. Based on the cultural dimensions of Mexican society, practitioners should establish relationships with people who have "connections" in Mexico. These types of relationships may help practitioners negotiate in Mexico and gain access to the people they need to speak to and work with for business purposes. Making these connections and building long-term relationships are some keys to successful negotiations in the future. Practitioners may find it necessary to work through and with other people to conduct business effectively in Mexico. For example, colleagues or local practitioners who have high "status" based on their family connections, personal or political influence, education or other aspects considered important in Mexican culture, should be made part of the negotiation process.

Phatak and Habib (1999) created a comprehensive model of international negotiation describing the different contexts and their relationship to the negotiation process and outcomes (p. 373). They suggested that there are two contexts in which all global negotiations occur: the environmental context (forces of the environment that are beyond the control of either party involved in the negotiations) and the immediate context (factors which the negotiators have influence and some measure of control) (p. 373). Both contexts are important for global negotiation and should be considered by public relations practitioners.

Many of the concepts discussed in the environmental context are relevant for public relations, especially cultural differences and external stakeholders. While the terms "stakeholders" and "publics" are often used interchangeably, there is a subtle difference between the two. Stakeholders are people who are in a category affected by decisions of an organization or vice versa. Many in a *stakeholder* category are often passive, and thus *publics* are those stakeholders who are or become active (J. Grunig and Repper, 1992, p. 125).

This article has focused on cultural differences between Mexicans and Americans. Specifically discussed was how understanding these differences may help public relations practitioners work more effectively with Mexican stakeholders and publics. For example, public relations practitioners should learn about their Mexican counterparts before the negotiation process or find a cultural interpreter to assist in the negotiation process in order to effectively communicate and negotiate in Mexico.

In addition, the five dimensions of the immediate context of international business negotiations are all relevant. The five dimensions include the relative bargaining power of negotiators and the nature of dependence, levels of conflict underlying potential negotiations, relationship between negotiators before and during negotiations, desired outcome of negotiations, and the impact on immediate stakeholders (Phatak and Habib, 1999, p. 380). In relation to the immediate stakeholders, Phatak and Habib described two components: (1) the negotiators on each side and their characteristics, and (2) the companies' managers, employees, and board of directors. Understanding these characteristics (the importance of protocol, hierarchical and authoritarian structure, and competition) will help public relations practitioners when attempting to utilize negotiation strategies in Mexico.

Implications for Public Relations Practice

Essentially, negotiators could adopt the global negotiation strategies or "principles" as public relations has done with the generic principles of public relations. Global public relations literature (e.g., J. Grunig, 1994) suggests that

effective global public relations utilizes the generic principles of public relations with specific applications. For example, public relations practitioners should practice two-way symmetrical communication with their publics (generic principle) but in Mexico one may not be able to practice symmetrical communication without a personal "connection" because of the high level of power distance and uncertainty avoidance in Mexican society. Therefore, it may be necessary to hire a local public relations practitioner or agency that has personal connections in Mexico (specific application) to gain access to strategic publics in Mexico. Once the proper introductions are made and the time has been taken to build a personal relationship with the Mexican counterpart, two-way symmetrical or mixed-motive communication should be used effectively. The other dimensions of culture imply similar specific applications.

For example, when working in Mexico, a high-context culture, it is important to make sure that business agreements are in writing because information is not "overtly" communicated. Public relations practitioners working for a client should ask for clarifications before a contract is finalized to verify that both parties are in agreement about it. If possible, work should never begin before everything is in writing, including goals, assignments, budgets, and deadlines (Sharlach, 1993). Putting things in writing should help practitioners avoid potential intercultural conflicts and illustrate the importance of planning in negotiation situations.

In addition, with a polychronic time orientation, Mexicans tend to do many things at once. Public relations practitioners should be aware of this. It is important to be patient and adapt to the different concept of time (Sharlach, 1993). Public relations practitioners should take the time necessary to build personal relationships in Mexico because relationships will help in all aspects of public relations and negotiation in Mexico.

In summary, all of the dimensions of culture should be considered in negotiation situations. There is no special "recipe" for successful intercultural/global negotiations. However, the strategies outlined here offer negotiators a number of alternatives to consider before they begin the negotiation process. Public relations practitioners who want to work for multinational organizations that have relationships in Mexico or with Mexican people need to consider all of the concepts discussed to build cultural awareness and understanding of Mexican culture. J. Grunig (1994) said, "It becomes imperative for public relations professionals to have a broad perspective that will allow them to work in many countries–or to work collaboratively with public relations professionals in many countries" (p. 5). Essentially, awareness of all of the elements of national culture should help public relations practitioners broaden their perspective about Mexico and allow them to communicate and negotiate effectively with Mexican people.

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