

## Management Strategies in Latin America

*“Clearing up the Cross-Cultural Confusion: 24 Qualitative Interviews”*

### Abstract

This investigation qualitatively examines two multinational enterprises along Mexico's northern border. A total of 24 in-depth interviews were conducted to investigate the cross-cultural day-to-day working relationships between American and Mexican employees. The results shed much needed light on human nature and international human resources.

### Introduction

The maquiladora industry has played a key role in Mexico's and the United States' economy over its 33-year lifespan. These high-tech industrial plants are a far cry from any inhumane sweatshop that one may think of to relate to the Mexican border (Sargent & Matthews, 1996). In fact, these world-class organizations sport a technologically competent industrial workforce. Employees doing the most routine jobs are often found monitoring and tracking their quality and quantity on Windows 98 or other complicated software.

Vargas (1999) recently reported some key indicators of the maquiladora industry in Mexico. The following are some of her key findings. The number of maquiladora plants has grown from 578 in 1980 to approximately 3,000 industrial factories. The Mexican maquiladora industry's workforce has ballooned from 119,546 in 1980 to over one million in 1999, an increase of over 730 percent. It is worth noting that Mexico's direct labor is now understood as skilled and semi-skilled and not simply as unskilled labor. Technical and administrative workforce as a percent of growth went from 14.7 in 1980 to about 20 percent in 1998. The increases in quote “knowledge workers” are a testament to the fact that advanced, technical, and well-paying jobs are continually being offered by multinationals in Mexico. Moreover, the increase in managerial professionals gives greater significance to this study.

Another interesting point to note is that the labor force is not a women-dominated workforce any longer. Some publications slip the total close to 50% female and 50% male. Vargas (1999) states that women comprised 57 percent of the maquiladora's employment in 1998. The maquiladora's impact on Mexico's economy was evident in 1995 when the country as a whole lost close to half a million jobs, the maquiladora industry added 65,000 jobs (Vargas, 1999). The fact that jobs were added may not be a surprise, since most maquiladoras were obtained by foreign direct investment (FDI). An important question that one can logically posit is, “How do employees deal with the cross-cultural issues that occur in everyday work life?”

Expatriate turnover is much higher than domestic turnover, hovering at a rate of 20%–50 % (Naumann, 1993; Copeland & Griggs, 1985; Mendenhall & Ouddou, 1985; Tung, 1988). Given this problem, which affects all expatriate managers, brings us to the purpose of this research. This paper's main goal is to add a new unseen perspective to the cross-cultural interactions between American and Mexican managerial professionals. Articles continually publish Mexican and American managerial differences, yet, little if any attention is given to the fact that many similarities exist and misunderstandings may be what account for the cultural differences. This paper adopts the position that the two cultures, in particular, at the management level are converging. This paper argues and presents research to support the position that Mexican and American managerial professionals are converging their ideas toward the future of global capitalism and leaving history (often cited as an enormous barrier to interpersonal relations) to bury its own dead (paying little attention to historical events). This may be thought of as workers' desire to simply obtain enough money to feed their families (an ethnocentric view). On the other hand, it can be viewed as Mexican professionals desiring and obtaining challenging, advanced, and highly responsible professional positions within an organization (striving for self-actualization).

### Literature Review

Researchers have studied maquiladoras from a variety of angles, including, but not limited to expatriate issues, NAFTA implications, organizational commitment, and of course, cultural differences. Hofstede's (1980) seminal research identified three critical areas in his 1960s research that has been used for many years in the literature. The three areas are power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and collectivism-individualism. Power distance identifies the amount of unequal distributions of power tolerated or assumed proper by a society. Uncertainty avoidance refers to how people in a society deal with unstructured situations or risks, individualism concerns itself with one's immediate group, and collectivism concerns itself more with the well-being of the society. Individualism-collectivism basically relates to how someone values the group versus the individual (Triandis, 1989). Individualist societies (e.g., U.S. and U.K.) emphasize values such as self-achievement and recognition, while collectivist societies (e.g., Mexico and Colombia) value societal norms and family.

It has often been cited that Mexicans have high power distance, high uncertainty avoidance, and are a collectivist society. Americans have been classified in the literature as low in power distance and uncertainty avoidance. Also, Americans are highly individualistic. While these relations hold true in countless studies, little, if any attention has been given to the Mexican professional workers of today.

One can logically ponder whether educated Mexican professional employees may have many of the same desires that American managerial professionals have. This research qualitatively investigates whether today's Mexican managerial professionals show any signs of being highly individualistic, embrace uncertainty (managerial risks), and eliminate power

distance between themselves and any higher-level authority. Stephens and Greer (1995) mention that Mexicans must not fear being punished and should speak up to their managers. De Forest (1994) states that Mexicans seek to develop harmony in the workplace and an attitude that “all is well”. Mexican and minority American managers in this research stated that this is not a problem in their work group. Most managers that are not warned of upcoming managerial problems (by not speaking up) are usually managers who would not change their minds or procedures to correct the upcoming managerial concerns. No literature yet exists which demonstrates counter explanations to this type of phenomena.

Gowan, Ibarreche, and Lackey (1996), in their interview with Lee Crawford, managing director of General Motors’ Delphi Division, boldly point out that management of human resources is the same anywhere in the world because people are after all, simply people who want to be treated the same. Issues such as organizational justice are important to investigate in a Mexican context. It is this idea of cross-cultural investigation that drives this research. Adler (1997) states that culture influences behavior by impacting our values, which lead to our attitudes, and subsequently, result in behavior. Loden and Rosener (1991) conceptualize culture into a primary and secondary dimension. The primary dimension includes unchangeable characteristics such as age, race, ethnicity, gender, physical abilities, and sexual orientation. The second dimension of culture, defined by Loden and Rosener, is where one can argue that convergence between the American and Mexican professional has occurred. The second dimension includes characteristics that are changeable and molded through time and experience. This includes things such as work background, income, educational levels, geographic location, religious beliefs, and marital status, to name a few. It is at this point of departure that this paper investigates twelve Mexican and twelve American managerial professionals in order to obtain a clear understanding as to the convergence or divergence of American and Mexican thinking.

### Methodology

As part of a larger study, 24 Mexican and American managerial professionals were interviewed. These interviews took place in Cd. Tamaulipas at two northern Mexico assembly plants. The two plants were TRW seatbelt manufacturing plants for all of northern American production. Among the companies they supply are General Motors, Ford, Volkswagen, and BMW, to name a few.

The method utilized to obtain the interviews consisted of meeting the managerial professional in his or her private office or the manager meeting with the researcher at the human resource plant manager’s office, which was available to the researcher at both plants. Overall, the interviews lasted between forty minutes to two hours each and the respondents were assured that their answers would remain anonymous. The managers were asked a number of questions relating to cross-cultural issues.

The researcher, using existing literature to guide its development developed the measurement instrument used in the interviews. Two principle works that most influenced the development of the questions asked were Stephen’s and Greer’s (1995) article, Understanding Cultural Differences and Hofstede’s (1980) cultural dimensions. A variety of direct and open-ended questions were used in this study.

Some of the questions asked were the following: How would you define culture?, What are the cultural areas that are the most challenging when working with the opposite culture?, In regards to management styles, what are the differences and similarities that you see between yourself and the opposite culture?, Is there anything that the opposite culture may do unintentionally that may be viewed by others as arrogant?, How important do you believe developing an interpersonal relationship in a work group is?, How is teamwork done in Mexico (versus the U.S.)?, Are unions different between the U.S. and Mexico?, What about the work ethic of Mexican and American employees?, Are there male and female differences in the organization?, and What can help the organization gain some competitive advantages by using their cultural diversity?

It is important to mention that the researcher is a male Hispanic professor. This is important because it was extremely useful in getting both the Americans and Mexicans to open up and share their true beliefs when they felt that they were speaking with someone that knew their culture. As a Hispanic, it is clearly and undeniably evident that both the American and Mexican value systems (culture) are well rooted within oneself.

### Results

While the 24 managerial interviews were each unique in their own respect, definite patterns and trends did emerge in the Mexican and American responses. The demographic information on the 24 managerial professionals is summarized below (Exhibit 1). The 24 managers were selected based on a stratified random sample in which nationality was the only criteria used to obtain 12 respondents from each culture. The organization’s database was then asked to print out a list of the 12 Americans and 12 Mexicans to interview.

<b>Demographics on Mexican and American Sample</b>			
<b>Exhibit 1</b>	<b><i>n=12</i></b>	<b><i>n=12</i></b>	<b><i>n=24</i></b>
	<b>American</b>	<b>Mexican</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	8	8	12
Female	4	4	12
<b>Ethnicity/Region</b>			

Northern Mexican		9	
Interior Mexican		3	12
Anglo-American	7		
Hispanic-American	3		
African-American	2		12
<b>Organization</b>			
Assembly Plant 1	5	8	13
Assembly Plant 2	6	5	11
<b>Management Type</b>			
Upper Management	6	4	10
Middle Management	6	8	14
<b>Organizational Department</b>			
Human Resource	2	2	4
Production/Quality	4	4	8
R & D/Plastics	3	1	4
MIS	1	1	2
Finance	1	1	2
Security/Shipping/Engineering	1	3	5

The following exhibits offer a summarized view of the respondents' answers to some of the questions in the interview. Content analysis of the researcher's notes, formal and informal conversations, and re-verification via telephone callbacks or office revisits established the following interesting results. The following are the statements made by the managerial professionals (both Mexican and American). The department and managers' nationality and gender are given for each response.

Exhibit 2
<b>The following are the responses to the question: What is culture to you?</b>
1) (Culture is) our values and attitudes toward everything in life. (Engineer – Mexican Male)
2) ...seen in the behavior of people. (Production – Anglo-American Male)
3) ...our customs and ways of doing things. We all have our ways of doing things, US Anglos, northern Mexicans, southern Mexicans, Mexicans in D.F., Hispanics, African-Americans or Indians in Mexico or the U.S. (HR – Mexican Male)
4) ...it is simply that which we learn in order to fit into a group. (HR – Hispanic-American Female)
5) ...the origins of each person that are passed down from our parents (Shipping – Mexican Male)
6) ...a certain lifestyle, norms which come from our families' experiences (Finance – Anglo-American Male)
7) ...our heritage, history, and values passed down by people all around us. I see that there is a mainstream interior U.S. and interior Mexican culture and that the border culture is unique in its own way. (Production – Anglo-American Male)
8) ...our education (MIS – Mexican Female)
9) ...our geographic location (R&D – Anglo-American Male)
10) ...our ethnicity (R&D – African-American Female)
11) ...the best way that I understand culture is like the BIOS of a computer, it is that which is so deep within us. (Production – Anglo-American Male)
12) ...the way I see it in me is two, if not three-fold because I clearly know Anglo-American, African-American, and perhaps even this Hispanic/Mexican border culture. (Production – African-American male)
13) ...works best when we all have one common goal. For example, the Great Wall of China in which that culture used teamwork to organize many hands and many minds and accomplished one common goal. (Quality – Mexican Female)

Exhibit 3
<b>The following are the responses to the question: What are the cultural areas that are the most challenging when working with the opposite culture?</b>
1) ...U.S. border citizens find Americans a bigger challenge than the Mexican nationals. The challenge for others is language. While I am very comfortable in both languages, others have a hard time. ...Mexicans really admire someone who shows effort to learn the Spanish language. I recall the first time a new plant manager came in. His first speech was in Spanish, while not perfect or even good Spanish, his effort

quickly gained the respect of the Mexican workers. (HR – Hispanic Female)
2) I have 15 years of experience and the language difference is still a big barrier to me. (Engineer – Mexican Male)
3) ...language, time, and the fact that some people do not speak up. (Production – Anglo-American Male)
4) ...language and communication are bigger challenges. Also, the education of a person and the factors that develop someone, such as music, art, etc... are challenging. (HR – Mexican Male)
5) ...I see two issues at work that make culture challenging. ...we have the short, direct, and to the point communication approach and the long, indirect, get to the point interactions. ...there must be a middle ground. (HR – Hispanic Female)
6) ...the fact that Americans seem to put work and money at a higher priority than family (Shipping – Mexican Male)
7) I find working with Mexicans the same because they work very hard. If anything, we may have something similar to what I dealt with in Mississippi, an old workforce that will not change and a young workforce that will change to anything. (Finance – Anglo-American male)
8) ...language because words seem to lose their true meaning in English. (MIS – Mexican Female)
9) ...implementing a Japanese system in Mexico is impossible without major customization. Americans give information out as is and Mexicans give out information without wanting to hurt anyone. (Production – Mexican Male)
10) The most challenging area is in the Americans' preset "Hollywood image" that a Mexican is a lazy person that 'siestas' up against a cactus all day long. (Security – Mexican Male)
11) ...coming to work in Mexico, I had the pre-set idea that employees would be lazy, not creative, and do a job half-way. Yet, what I found was quite the opposite. The people are not lazy, are very creative, and if anything, simply lack the tools to be more productive. It's funny, but when Mexicans lack the tools for productivity, they oftentimes invent the tools out of whatever is available. (R&D – Anglo-American)

#### **Exhibit 4**

**The following are the responses to the question: In regards to management styles, what are the differences or similarities that you see between yourself and the opposite culture?**

1) (Similarity) I don't see any cultural differences in regards to work, maybe under etiquette, which means very little at work. Soon after Americans are here for awhile they will be the first ones asking at lunch (whether at noon or 3 p.m.) "Where are the tortillas?". (HR – Hispanic Female)
2) (Similarity) ...during an important project, we all (Americans and Mexicans) stay extra time to help each other to complete the work. (Production – Anglo-American male)
3) (Difference) Mexicans' idea of the family extends much further than the American idea of the family. Sometimes, an employee may be absent because he or she needs to be there for a cousin. (Production – Anglo-American)
4) (Similarity) ...I don't see any difference in managing either an American or a Mexican. People here in Mexico, like everywhere else that I have been in this world, simply want common treatment of people. (HR – Mexican male)
5) (Difference) ...company policies are followed to the letter and Mexicans view the policies as more flexible. That is not to say that the Mexican is less ethical, rather, the Mexican injects a friendship factor that makes him or her willing to bend the rules. (Production – Mexican male)
6) (Similarity) ...sometimes seniority may feel like yelling, but they know that at the managerial level, that has no respect here. Humans are human and decisions must be fair at the upper, middle, and lower levels of the organization. (Production – Mexican female)
7) (Difference) ...for myself, I find that I have to justify my managerial actions to my subordinates much more so than my Anglo-American managerial counterpart. (Security – Mexican male)
8) (Similarity) ...I find managing here a lot like a small town back in New York. People are friendly, honest, family-oriented, and strongly hold to their religious values. (R&D – Anglo-American)
9) (Similarity) ...much is said about Mexicans not speaking up and the problems that this causes managerially. Personally, I have never had this problem in my workgroup. I believe this is because I have made a conscious effort to remain humble and interested in learning the Mexicans' culture, along with teaching them mine. I have gone to eat with my team in the run down parts of town in Mexico, but I have also taken them on a road trip to eat with my wife and I in the modern parts of town in the U.S. My Mexican subordinates have told me on many occasions that the reason they don't speak up to many managers is because regardless of their input, the manager will still do things his or her own way. They typically refer to this as letting their manager hang him or herself. My workgroup has stopped me from hanging myself countless of times because they feel that their input is valued by me. (Production – African-American)

10) (Similarity) ...work is work. Both cultures work very hard and we all put in the same effort. (Quality – Mexican female)

#### **Exhibit 5**

**The following are the responses to the question: What motivates a Mexican and/or an American employee?**

1) Mexican employees are motivated by things that meet their basic needs, such as food coupons that free up their take-home pay for other things, by the company showing that they care for them and simple little things that are not all business. (HR – Hispanic female)

2) ...the work itself, prizes, recognition, or even group photos for the best performance. (Engineer – Mexican male)

3) ...since we know that family bonds are at the core of Mexican values, one can really motivate employees by starting here. For example, in the past, I had a high problem with employee absenteeism and turnover. Thus, I developed a strategy to motivate Mexicans with what matters to them. I simply made a calendar that tracked each individual's absenteeism at the end of each month, the few employees that were present each day received movie tickets for his or her entire family. After a few months, my absenteeism problem went away. I was a bit surprised, until one day a Mexican man mentioned to me that this was the only way that he could afford to take his entire family to a modern, recent movie. I believe that I was getting at a core Mexican motivational value. In fact, after pursuing this matter further with other employees, I found that the employees' children usher their parents off to work in order that they may see a modern movie at the end of each month (Papi! Papi! Go to work! We want to go to the movies again this month!). (HR – Mexican male)

4) ...one can motivate Mexicans by simply knowing them by name and treating them as a person. (HR – Mexican male)

5) ...if you want Mexicans to go the extra mile, you as a manager must be willing to go the extra mile as well. (HR – Hispanic female)

6) ...money seems to be what motivates Americans, while Mexicans can be motivated by thanking them for doing an extremely good job from your heart (in other words, truly meaning it). (Shipping – Mexican male)

7) ...pay and obtaining material possessions motivate Americans. (Finance – Anglo-American)

8) ...special recognition, pizza, or cake for major accomplishments truly motivate Mexicans. So does overtime pay for weekend work and around Christmastime. (Production – Anglo-American)

9) ...more challenging work and responsibility motivate Mexican professionals, and Americans are motivated by materialistic things. (MIS – Mexican female)

10) ...Mexicans can be easily motivated by money and Americans can be motivated through getting credit and recognition. (Production – Mexican male)

11) ...primarily, economic pay motivates both cultures. Secondarily, letting people know through good feedback that they do good work. (Quality – Mexican female)

12) ...one thing that truly motivates the Mexican labor force is having an open house where the employee's entire family is welcomed to come and see the employee's work area and meet the manager. (R&D – Mexican male)

#### **Exhibit 6**

**The following are the responses to the question: Are there any male and female differences in the organization?**

1) ...my older American male manager used to treat me like a child because I suppose that he read or was told somewhere along the way that Mexicans look to managers as paternal figures. I still recall him saying that my trip to Mexico City was too dangerous for a young northern Mexican woman. (MIS – Mexican female)

2) ...the same is expected from both males and females. Traditionally, women had far outnumbered the men in these organizations. (HR – Hispanic male)

3) ...women need to be more involved in the higher levels of management. That is not to say that many have not made great strides already. Yet, it seems to me that women's ideas are not taken as seriously or looked at with a fine-tooth comb. (MIS – Hispanic-American woman)

4) ...men are typically thought of as machismo. I believe that it is women today that are aggressive and have power over men with their provocative dress. (R&D – African-American female)

5) ...a Central American manager used to treat northern Mexico women very abusively. It did not take this manager long to realize that that type of treatment of people doesn't work here in northern Mexico. After

attending a conference in Monterrey, this manager soon changed his managerial style toward women.\* (HR – Mexican female)

#### **Exhibit 7**

**The following are the responses to the question: How does decision-making work with Mexicans and Americans?**

1) ...Mexicans make decisions, whether good or bad because we can learn from them and fix them through feedback. (Engineer – Mexican male)

2) ...we Americans tend to over-analyze every decision. (HR – Hispanic female)

3) ...Americans make decisions quickly and Mexicans tend to avoid making any decision. (HR – Hispanic female)

4) ...Americans plan, and plan, and plan before they finally act. Mexicans, on the other hand, think more along the lines of black and white. We make quick decisions and rely on luck. (Shipping – Mexican male)

5) ...Americans think decisions through, while Mexicans tend to be more reactive. Also, Americans clearly separate personal issues from business affairs, whereas, Mexicans seem to involve their emotions more. (Finance – Anglo-American)

#### **Exhibit 8**

**The following are the responses to the question: What can help the organization gain some competitive advantages by using its cultural diversity? (quotes worth repeating)**

1) ...one thing that truly motivates the Mexican labor force is having an open house where the employee's entire family is welcomed to come and see the employee's work area and meet the manager. (R&D – Mexican male)

2) (Similarity) ...much is said about Mexicans not speaking up and the problems that this causes managerially. Personally, I have never had this problem in my workgroup. I believe this is because I have made a conscious effort to remain humble and interested in learning the Mexicans' culture, along with teaching them mine. I have gone to eat with my team in the run down parts of town in Mexico, but I have also taken them on a road trip to eat with my wife and I in the modern parts of town in the U.S. My Mexican subordinates have told me on many occasions that the reason they don't speak up to many managers is because regardless of their input, the manager will still do things his or her own way. They typically refer to this as letting their manager hang him or herself. My workgroup has stopped me from hanging myself countless of times because they feel that their input is valued by me. (Production – African-American)

3) ...since we know that family bonds are at the core of Mexican values, one can really motivate employees by starting here. For example, in the past, I had a high problem with employee absenteeism and turnover. Thus, I developed a strategy to motivate Mexicans with what matters to them. I simply made a calendar that tracked each individual's absenteeism at the end of each month, the few employees that were present each day received movie tickets for his or her entire family. After a few months, my absenteeism problem went away. I was a bit surprised, until one day a Mexican man mentioned to me that this was the only way that he could afford to take his entire family to a modern, recent movie. I believe that I was getting at a core Mexican motivational value. In fact, after pursuing this matter further with other employees, I found that the employees' children usher their parents off to work in order that they may see a modern movie at the end of each month (Papi! Papi! Go to work! We want to go to the movies again this month!). (HR – Mexican male)

4) ...this organization is a true melting pot, with cultures from all around the world. I believe that business is a powerful force in helping cultures to work together. (MIS – Hispanic-American female)

5) ...Mexicans will go the extra mile for you if they trust that you are a sincere person (buena gente). (Production – Mexican male)

6) ...putting fairness at top importance will help this organization obtain higher effectiveness. (Production – Anglo-American male)

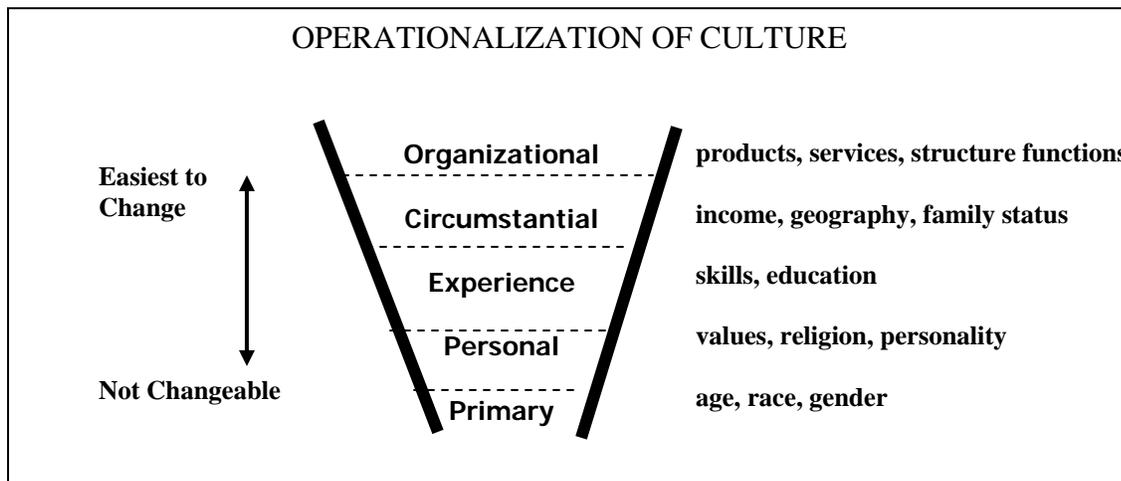
7) ...classes or discussions on topics such as American history, Mexican history, and activities outside of work would probably help to gain loyalty from employees. (Finance – Anglo-American male)

#### **Managerial and Researcher Implications**

The demographic table in Exhibit 1 show proper effect of the stratified random sample that was used to obtain the 12 American and 12 Mexican managerial professionals from a pool of all managerial employees. The dividing culture by way of ethnicity and geographical region of the Mexican and American sample revealed an adequate representation of the

two companys' current managerial professional composition. Some of the managers in this study are responsible for both plants and are categorized into the plant that they spend the most time in. The demographics in the management category may be a bit misleading. One may think that Americans have most of the upper and middle managerial positions. This is just not so. In fact, the trend in recent years has seen many American managers leave their posts and be replaced with well-educated, capable, and experienced Mexican managerial employees. In searching for an explanation a production (Anglo-American) manager asserts that he feels that he will never be as effective as he wants to be in Mexico.

In regard to Exhibit 2, culture should be viewed as our values, norms, and as one manager mentioned, "the BIOS of our life". One must also note that while the primary dimension (e.g., gender, age, skin color, race etc...) of our culture does not change, secondary dimensions such as geographical region, education, and religious beliefs can be molded or adapted over time. The clear implication for managers is to constantly work towards finding common values for the whole organization to press toward because if that is not done, employees will diverge. A good way to conceptualize culture may be to consider at what level of culture you need change. Bear in mind that you will get no change at the core or primary stage and that business should not concern itself with these issues. The table below shows a clear conceptualization of culture. It may very well be that a manager can be very effective at just the organizational level (e.g., company t-shirt day, organizational extracurricular activity), while others may find a way to tap their employees' personal level of culture (i.e. finding what the employee values).



As seen in Exhibit 3 the classic language barrier was found to remain a barrier that is impeding effective cross-cultural work success. The organization is currently doing a lot to teach English in the organization to almost every type of employee. In addition to this remarkable effort by the multinational, it could also offer on-site Spanish classes during work hours to simply keep American employees brushed up on their Spanish. The truth of the matter is that many American employees can go to work and not interact with anyone other than headquarters in U.S. all day long. If nothing else, offering Spanish classes along with English classes shows the effort of fairness being made by the organization. Although, an American that takes advantage of this may find his or her effort going a long way in the minds of his or her Mexican co-workers.

Time and the laid back attitudes about certain projects was not mentioned to a high degree. It is believed by the researcher that time may be an important issue. A male Mexican managerial professional (in the High Potential "Hi Po" – Managerial Fast Track) commented that if getting a member of your work group to be at work on time is a big problem, "Give the repeated offender a watch with the organization's logo on it". Why? Again, he believes that by you giving the employee a fairly nice gift you may hit the personal level (value) of culture and that the employee may feel obligated to be on time or at least feel guilty that he or she knew the time and did not make it.

Current thinking about Mexican culture suggests that efficiency is not 'god' and that there is a lack of 'quality' management (Valadez, 1994). This study found ample evidence that this is not the case for Mexican managerial professionals. Many Mexican managers are well versed (educated) in the benefits of quality and efficiency in their organizations. In fact, some Mexican professionals are demanding and receive equal, and in some cases, higher pay than their American counterparts. It is evident that Mexicans are very eager to educate themselves and directly or indirectly way pressure their country's government to lose its corruption and enter the 22<sup>nd</sup> century as a stable political country.

Exhibit 4 overwhelmingly found that many similarities exists in regards to management styles. A top concern that managers must always deal with is the fact that "people want/need to be treated well, fairly, and with humble respect". It is believed that once a Mexican gives his or her trust, he or her will easily go the extra mile for you and the organization. This area of fairness, trust, and citizenship behavior is a good area for researchers to empirically investigate.

In Exhibit 4 we also find that employees of both cultures are willing to display organizational citizenship behaviors (Organ, 1988). Recall the production manager that has no problem with employees staying late to help with an important project. Regardless, of whether the employees clock out (which must be done before returning to work) they know that they

will not see a peso (a dime is U.S. funds) for their extra effort. Again, OCB is an important phenomenon that lacks good rigorous study in Mexico.

One manager mentioned, "The employees do not stand up to you even if you are totally wrong. I've even intentionally been totally wrong on purpose in hopes of getting some feedback from them", while another manager mentioned the opposite, "The employees constantly tell me when I am wrong and save me from hanging myself". The Mexican employees whom these managers are referring to state the following, "Yes we know that managers are sometimes wrong, but even if we tell them, some of them will not take your input seriously or they will do it their pre-planned way". The researcher can only posit that certain managers, as is the case with the new plant manager that went out of his way to make his first speech all in his best version of Spanish, are able to show Mexicans that they are "buena gente" and gain the employee's trust. It may be important to mention to your subordinates that their ideas will not be laughed at and that their input will be taken seriously. To some Mexicans, flexing the rules when human emotions are involved may be very important in gaining their trust. Showing them that you will go with their intuitive plan in a decision even if you feel that their way will fail may also gain their trust and respect. The idea is that failing with a Mexican only makes the comeback stronger in the next decision. It basically shows Mexicans that you are a genuine person (buena gente) who has their best interest in mind.

Mexicans, on the other hand, must understand that American males are excellent thinkers, one thing at a time (Hall, 1976). Thus, if you are passed by without being greeted, it means absolutely nothing and you should not in any way, shape, or form take it the wrong way. Americans mentioned that they have unintentionally hurt some people's personal feelings because they walked right by someone and did not say hi, because they were thinking about a call they needed to make once they got in their office. There is a lot to be said for someone that can clearly separate the personal dimensions of life from the business dimensions of everyday life.

Motivation of Americans and Mexicans in Exhibit 5 demonstrates how a manager can tap the values of an employee and succeed in a cross-cultural environment. Adler (1997) exposes how culture impacts our values, our values impact our attitudes, and attitudes impact our behavior. This study found enterprising Mexican and American managers understanding the behavior that they need out of the employees (lower absenteeism), then considering the employees' attitudes (why they are coming and why they are not coming to work), and then using what they know about the employees' values (family – movie night) as motivation to change the employees' culture and subsequently, their behavior (absenteeism).

Women have made large managerial steps in recent years. Some multinational organizations in Mexico boast about their top managerial women. Male and female relationships in Mexico are facing similar issues than those in the U.S. a few years ago before sexual harassment laws. Multinational organizations should take the lead in helping both male and female employees to obtain respectful and ethical conduct at work (Exhibit 6). The multinational organizations that take the lead in this regard will find themselves with a vast competitive advantage in comparison to their old school or buddy system MNEs. MNEs will leave governmental laws no room in which employees may sue the organizations in the future. Also, the organization will breed employees that will know that their inputs and contributions to the organization will be taken seriously and judged fairly.

Americans versus Mexicans were found in this study to differ in the way decisions are made by (Exhibit 7). Americans tend to over-analyze and over plan, while Mexicans seem to make decisions by trial and error. Some middle ground can be found in this challenging issue facing the multinational organization. Perhaps the MIS department can set up a Decision Expert System (EXSYS) or a database that will track the results of both trial and error, over-planned, and over-analyzed decisions, mistakes, and successes.

## **Conclusion**

In concluding with the results of what can be done by MNEs to foster immense competitive advantages, it is important that a few interesting responses be brought to the attention of all interested readers. First of all, the word "gringo" in Spanish is not thought of as a bad word. In fact, it is quite respectful. Both Mexican and American (except for one Mexican female that lived in the U.S. and obtained a top U.S. university degree— she was positive that there is no important differences) managerial professionals began the interview thinking that large unsurpassable differences between the two cultures existed and finished the interview thinking that at least among the managerial professional levels, both culture's employees are quite similar.

One extremely interesting response was from an Anglo-American who stated that, "At the end of the day, the organization and myself (all of us) are even. They do not owe me a job and I don't owe them an employee." An interesting quote made by a Mexican was, "Have you heard about the American lobsters and Mexican lobsters that were trying to get out of the bucket and jump back into the ocean before the boat got to port? Which do you think got out, the American or the Mexican lobsters? ...the American lobsters, because they climb, though teamwork, on each other's backs until the last one makes it out. While on the other hand, when the Mexican lobsters saw one of their own getting up too high, the rest of them would pull him down". Another note worthy quote was a Mexican male who said, "I don't trust the banks or the government in Mexico. At payday I quickly convert my pesos to dollars and put them in an American account. This works well for me. Although, I do trust this organization a lot."

Qualitative research is extremely challenging, time-consuming, difficult, and costly, yet surprisingly is able to produce incredibly useful results towards understanding and explaining a researched phenomena. The data included in this

study is but a portion of the data collected by the researcher. Further research should study topics such as unions, teamwork, trust, loyalty, impression management, and escalation of commitment.

There is an old Mexican saying that emphasizes, "We don't ask God for anything. We simply ask that He puts us near to where there is some opportunity (meaning – they will take care of doing the hard work)." Mexican multinational organizations would serve themselves well to understand this Mexican saying because God has put them where opportunity is at and must now do the hard work to obtain advantages over their competition. These recommendations are viewed as important in this investigation: 1) Have an "open house" once a year; 2) Gain subordinate's trust by showing them that you are "buena gente"; 3) motivate employees with that which they value; 4) use the diversity that you are given to gain new ways to achieve more; 5) pursue organizational citizenship behavior from all employees; 6) make a conscious effort to show the organization's fairness to all; and 7) continue educating your workforce. They are your greatest assets.

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