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The Influence of Power Distance and Communication on Mexican Workers

Paul E. Madlock[1]

Abstract

This study extended communication scholarship by examining the influence of cultural congruency between micro- and macro-cultures regarding power distance on Mexican employees' communication behaviors, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. Included were the responses from 168 full-time nonmanagement working adults of Mexican origin working in Mexican organizations. The current study was grounded by the theory of independent mindedness. The findings offered support for the value of cultural congruency between the societal culture (macro) and the organizational culture (micro). Additional findings indicated that power distance, avoidance messages, communication apprehension, and communication satisfaction, were all positively related to the job satisfaction and organizational commitment of Mexican employees.

Keywords

intercultural communication, communication apprehension, theory of independent mindedness, approach/avoidance messages, work alienation, job satisfaction, organizational commitment

The global economy has created a reality where relationships between U.S. organizations and other countries such as Mexico have become a way of life for businesses. With respect to Mexico, the predominance of prior research has focused on management

[1]Texas A&M International University, Laredo, TX, USA

Corresponding Author:
Paul E. Madlock, College of Business Administration, Texas A&M International University,
313 K. Pellegrino Hall, 5201 University Boulevard, Laredo, TX 78041-1900, USA
Email: paul.madlock@tamiu.edu

employee relations (DeForest, 1994; Lindsley, 1999) with many examining how U.S. managers should lead Mexican workers (Sargent & Matthews, 1998). For the current study, the theory of independent mindedness (TIM; Infante, 1987) was used as a theoretical background for exploring relationships among concepts related to it; however, this study did not serve to directly test the theory. The TIM is a uniquely communication-based theory that buttresses well with research in economics, business, and psychology. This theory seeks congruency or similarity between the culture created within the specific organization (i.e., micro-culture) and the larger culture (i.e., macro-culture) within which the organization operates (Infante, 1987). This cultural coordination is the foundation of the theory. For example, the culture in the United States places value on freedom of expression, individual rights, and equality. According to the TIM, these values should be reflected and cultivated in organizations located in the United States, resulting in cultural congruency between the micro- and macro-cultures. This theory posits that cultural congruency will bring about motivated, satisfied, and productive employees. According to the TIM, employees in the United States should be active members in decision making and be engaged in vigorous exchange of ideas and perspectives with the management. However, unlike most U.S. management approaches, power and status differences should not be diminished but acknowledged and emphasized as they are part of organizational life in Mexican organizations.

Because of criticisms associated with whether the values expressed in particular organizations reflect those of the population as a whole (Graham, 2004) the TIM was used as a platform with which to highlight the influence of the societal culture on the culture of the organization within which it operates. According to the TIM cultural congruency should exist between the macro (societal) and the micro (organizational) cultures in order to maximize the satisfaction and productivity of employees. As a result, the construct of power distance, was used here to assess the culture in Mexican organizations (micro-culture) because Mexico is a high power distance country (macro-culture) with a score of 81, which ranks fifth among the 50 countries included in Hofstede's (1980, 2001) studies. Power distance refers to the extent to which inequality among persons in different positions of formal power are viewed as a natural (and even desirable) aspect of the social order (Hofstede, 1980, 2001). In other words, *power distance* refers to the degree to which an individual prefers to be told what to do and how by persons in higher power positions than themselves. According to Hofstede (2001) the norms of high power distance cultures (e.g., Mexico) legitimize differences in decision-making power between those who are in high power positions versus those who are in low power positions. In contrast, the norms of low– power distance cultures (e.g., United States) reduce power differences among people in positions of varying levels of formal decision-making power. In low power distance cultures, people in positions with legitimate decision-making power are more likely to share their power with those in lower power positions. Put differently, in low power distance cultures people in lower power positions are more likely to believe that they should have voice in decision processes, or at least more than that would be the case in high power distance cultures. All of this suggests that cultural congruency between

the societal (macro) and the organizational (micro) cultures is a key factor in determining the way in which employees' communicate with one another and their work-related outcomes.

Thus, one could expect that in countries with high power distance, such as Mexico, employees' cultural practices are particularly important drivers in regulating the communication behaviors between members of the organization. In short, based on the growing interest of foreign firms such as the United States doing business in the Mexican market or moving operations to Mexico, understanding the communication dynamics that take place within the Mexican workplace warrants special attention by organizational communication and business scholars alike. Therefore, the current study was framed by the TIM in order to examine the effect of cultural congruency with respect to power distance in Mexican organizations and its influence on subordinates' communication apprehension (CA), approach/avoidance behaviors, and communication satisfaction (CS) on their job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The following will provide support for the current study by examining the contribution of the aforementioned variables beginning with the inclusion of CA.

Communication Apprehension

Employees in high power distance organizations such as those found in Mexico may find themselves uninvolved, inattentive, and disengaged interactants in communication dialogues with their supervisors, based on the one-way downward nature of the communication that takes place within such organizations. In other words, the influence power distance has on employees, such as being told what to do and how, may influence their communication behaviors to the extent that they develop an aversion to, or avoid communicating with their supervisors altogether. Therefore, it could be extrapolated that, situational CA is likely to manifest itself in such subjugated environments.

CA "is a broad-based fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons" (Falcione, McCroskey, & Daly, 1977, p. 364). The individual with high CA is a person whose fear of participating in communication interactions outweighs his or her projected gain from engaging in such exchanges (Phillips, 1968). He or she anticipates negative feelings and outcomes from communication and will either avoid communication, if possible, or suffer a great deal of anxiety when communicating.

Research specific to U.S. organizations indicates that employees who are apprehensive are viewed negatively and have difficulty entering organizations (Richmond & Roach, 1992). These individuals often find communicating with their supervisors burdensome (Bartoo & Sias, 2004) and end up being outside the organizations' in-groups (Madlock, Martin, Bogdan, & Ervin, 2007). Employees who are communicatively apprehensive also have low job satisfaction, low status positions, participate less, and have low organizational commitment (Winiecki & Ayres, 1999). Additionally, communicatively apprehensive workers are often going to choose not to communicate, and

"that silence can exact a high psychological price on individuals, generating feelings of humiliation, pernicious anger, resentment, and the like that, if unexpressed, contaminate every interaction, shut down creativity, and undermine productivity" (Perlow & Williams, 2003, p. 52).

> Power distance refers to the degree to which an individual prefers to be told what to do and how by persons in higher power positions than themselves.

In addition to trait apprehension discussed above there is also situational CA, which involves conditions that prohibit communication (Richmond & McCroskey, 1998). Thus, work environments such as those found in high power distance cultures such as those in Mexico actually perpetuate a level of CA from their employees. Specific to studies examining CA across cultures, Klopf (1997) noted that comparisons of CA have been made from Australia, China, Japan, Korea, Micronesia, Philippines, Puerto Rico, Sweden, Switzerland, and Taiwan. Although Mexico was not specifically mentioned in the prior research highlighted by Klopf, many of the aforementioned countries have cultures similar to that of Mexico. Klopf pointed out that there were differences in how CA levels were viewed in different cultures. Specifically, in cultures that are considered to be collectivistic and high in power distance (e.g., Tiawan and Mexico), silence was considered to be more acceptable than talking. As predicted by the TIM, since Mexico is a high power distance culture and organizations in Mexico should adapt to the macro-culture of society, it is reasoned here that employees working in Mexican-owned and -operated organizations located in Mexico would experience situational CA in the workplace.

Approach Avoidance

Approach-avoidance messages have been conceptualized as the way in which individuals communicate that signals approach or avoidance interactions (Mottet & Richmond, 1998). When supervisors and colleagues use immediate and approach-oriented messages, the recipient of these messages feel like an important part of the organization. However, when the messages a recipient receive lack immediacy and are avoidance-oriented, the person is left "feeling like an outcast, betrayed, and work being a waste of time" (Koermer, Goldstein, & Forston, 1993, p. 277). When workers face negative forms of communication in the workplace (e.g., avoidance messages), their attendance, productivity, and commitment all decrease and workers tend to view their fellow employees and the organization negatively (Pearson & Porath, 2005).

Mottet and Richmond (1998) identified various approach and avoidance communication strategies. For example, approach strategies included personal recognition (e.g., calling a coworker by his or her name), inclusiveness (e.g., inviting someone to participate in organizational activities), openness (e.g., informing a colleague of organizational plans), and compliments (e.g., telling someone when a task was done well).

Avoidance strategies included being abrupt (e.g., cutting someone off and saying you have no time to listen to him or her), distant (e.g., talking only superficially and never personally), offensive (e.g., calling a coworker an unflattering nickname), and condescending (e.g., talking down to a colleague).

Since high power distance cultures such as Mexico accept inequality among persons in different positions of formal power and employees prefer to have their supervisors dictate what needs to be done and how, employees may refrain from engaging in communication behaviors with their supervisors. The norms of high power distance cultures (e.g., Mexico) legitimize differences in decision-making power between those who are in high power positions versus those who are in low power positions (Hofstede, 1983). In other words, as a result of high power distance found in the Mexican culture, employees may prefer to use avoidance behaviors when communicating with their supervisors. Given what is known about approach-avoidance messages, it was reasoned here that such messages may be culturally specific and in turn may influence work-related outcomes. Therefore, it would stand to reason that employees in high power distance cultures would engage in avoidance messages and eschew approach messages.

Communication Satisfaction

CS in the workplace has been defined as satisfaction with various aspects of the communication that occurs in the organization, such as the amount and quality of information available that clarifies work tasks (Crino & White, 1981). Various studies examining the importance of communication on organizational success have shown CS to be positively associated with employees' job satisfaction and motivation (Joshi & Sharma, 1997), job performance (Gruneberg, 1979), productivity (Clampit & Downs, 1993), and organizational commitment (Putti, Aryee, & Phua, 1990). To the contrary, research also indicates that employees who experience low levels of CS tend to experience reduced commitment, greater absenteeism, increased industrial unrest, high turnover, and reduced productivity (Hargie, Tourish, & Wilson, 2002). With an emphasis on supervision, Pincus's (1986) research indicated that supervisors' communication behaviors have an important influence on the job and CS of subordinates.

However, to date little research has examined the communication practices within Mexican organizations including CS between supervisors and subordinates. Further, limited prior research has accounted for the influence of power distance and the resulting communication behaviors of CA and approach/avoidance on the CS of Mexican workers. Given this lack of research, coupled with the high power distance culture of Mexico and the one-way communications interactions that take place within these organizations, it is reasoned here that the current findings may be of interest to organizational communication scholars. Further, as prior research has indicated with employees in the United States (see, Joshi & Sharma, 1997; Putti et al., 1990), it could be extrapolated that Mexican workers who experience CS with their supervisors may also report being satisfied with their jobs and committed to the organization. As a result,

the inclusion of job satisfaction and organizational commitment was considered here and will be discussed in greater detail below.

Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment

Job satisfaction has been defined as "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences" (Locke, 1976, p. 1297). The most common factors leading to worker stress and dissatisfaction are those emanating from the nature of the job itself, within which interpersonal relationships between employees and management take place (Kenny & Cooper, 2003). According to Korte and Wynne (1996), a deterioration of relationships in organizational settings resulting from reduced interpersonal communication between workers negatively influences job satisfaction, and sometimes leads to employees leaving their jobs.

Organizational commitment has been conceptualized in a number of ways. For example, Ferris and Aranya (1983) conceptualized organizational commitment as "the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization as well as the willingness to exert effort and remain in the organization" (p. 87). Mowday, Porter, and Steers (1982) defined organizational commitment as the strength of an employee's emotional attachment to the organization and the acceptance of the organization's goals and values. Both of the prior definitions emphasize identification and acceptance of the organization as a whole and were considered to fit the current study based on the collectivistic nature of Mexico and, the focus here is on power distance. Organizational commitment research has been primarily associated with U.S. organizations yielding outcomes including increased job satisfaction (Bateman & Strasser, 1984), increased job performance (Cohen, 1992), leadership (Morris & Sherman, 1981), and decreased burnout (Wright & Bonett, 1997), as well as personal characteristics such as increased well-being (Mowday et al., 1982).

According to Randall (2008), research on commitment and job satisfaction has entered an international phase including countries such as Mexico; however, these studies are still relatively scarce. Prior intercultural studies not specific to Mexican organizations have identified differences in levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment across cultures. For example, differences in satisfaction and commitment have been attributed to cultural values (Clugston, Howell, & Dorfman, 2000). Palich, Hom, and Griffeth (1995) found employee satisfaction and commitment levels in 15 European and Canadian affiliates (collectivistic cultures) of a U.S. multinational organization to be negatively affected by individualism. Since Mexico is a collectivistic high power distance culture (Hofstede, 1983), it is reasoned here that Mexican workers would prefer an organizational culture that matched their larger societal culture and as a result would be satisfied and committed employees.

Rationale for Hypothesis

One could expect that in countries with high power distance, such as Mexico, employees' cultural practices would be important drivers in regulating the communication

behaviors between members of the organization. Therefore, the current study examined the effect of cultural congruency with respect to power distance in Mexican organizations and its influence on subordinates' CA, approach/avoidance, and CS on their job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Based on what we know about the communication practices that take place within Mexican organizations as a result of high power distance (e.g., one-way communication in which superiors tell subordinates what to do and how to do it), the following model represents the hypothesized relationships between the variables included in this study.

Method

Participants

Participants were 168 full-time nonmanagement working adults (n = 99, 58.9% male) and (n = 69, 41.1% female) of Mexican origin from Mexican organizations. Tenure ranged from 2 to 32 years (M = 10.41 years, SD = 9.42) with ages ranging from 24 to 64 years (M = 35.28 years, SD = 8.98). The Mexican employees reported working for a variety of organizations, including education 6.9 %, service 52.6%, high-tech 7.4%, manufacturing 26.1%, and other 7.0%.

Procedures

The survey used for the current study was originally written in English, translated into Spanish by a bilingual professor at a midsized Southern University and back-translated into English by another bilingual professor at the same university to ensure that no meaning was lost during the translation. The sample included full-time *nonmanagerial* working adults of Mexican origin who worked for Mexican-owned and -operated organizations located in Mexico. The participants were recruited by the primary author as well as undergraduate business majors at a midsized University located in the Southern region of the United States. The business students who assisted in recruiting participants either currently live in Mexico and commute to school or are originally from Mexico and now live in the United States whose primary or extended family still live and work in Mexico. These students were placed in teams based on the geographic location in Mexico where they or their family members live in order to attempt to include participants from a geographically disperse range of organizations in Mexico.

> The norms of high power distance cultures (e.g., Mexico) legitimize differences in decision-making power between those who are in high-power positions versus those who are in low-power positions.

To ensure that the participants met the above criteria they were given an e-mail address in which they were asked to report their name, the name of their organization, and a telephone number in which they could be reached. Participants were then asked

to return the completed questionnaire in the self-addressed stamped envelope provided by the author. They were also asked to place their name, as it appeared in the prior e-mail, on the lower right-hand corner of the envelope. Confidentiality, not anonymity was ensured because the author was the only person to handle the completed questionnaires. Only envelopes containing a completed questionnaire and a name that matched one on an e-mail were used in the study. Of the 300 original questionnaires, 181 were returned resulting in a 60.3% return rate. Of the 181 returned questionnaires, 13 could not be used due to missing data leaving 168 questionnaires utilized here.

Measures

Power distance was measured by the six-item measure of power distance developed by Dorfman and Howell (1988). This measure was used because it has been used in prior studies that focused on high power distance cultures similar to that of Mexico. A sample item reads, "Managers should make most decisions without consulting subordinates." The six-item instrument was measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). Prior research indicated scale reliability of .74 (Farh, Hackett, & Liang, 2007). Cronbach's coefficient alpha for the current study was .83 ($M = 26.63$, $SD = 5.18$).

Approach avoidance was measured by the 14-item Approach/Avoidance Scale (Mottet & Richmond, 1998). Ten items measured approach behaviors and four items measured avoidance behaviors. The self-report scale was designed to measure the degree to which a person engages in approach and avoidance behaviors. Sample items include a lead in sentence of "When communicating with others at work" followed by "I use ritualistic statements by saying such things as 'Hey, what's up?' 'Hi, how are you doing?' 'Take care,' 'Be careful,' and 'I'll talk to you later'" (approach statement) or "I use discourteous and abrupt communication by interrupting and changing the subject, using inappropriate profanity, and by answering my questions with simple, short "YES/NO" answers" (avoidant statement). The items were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 0 = *never* to 4 = *very often*. Prior research has shown scale reliability of .79 for approach behaviors, and .87 for avoidance behaviors (Madlock & Martin, 2009). For the current study Cronbach's coefficient alpha was .85 ($M = 17.35$, $SD = 6.58$) for approach behaviors, and .81 ($M = 12.82$, $SD = 3.98$) for avoidance behaviors.

Communication apprehension was measured by the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24; McCroskey, 2001). The 24 items measure overall CA as well as apprehension in the contexts of groups, meetings, interpersonal, and public. Sample items include "I dislike participating in group discussions" and "I'm afraid to speak up in conversations." The 24-item instrument was measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). The scale was recoded so that higher scores reflected higher levels of CA. Prior research has shown scale reliability of .94 (Madlock & Martin, 2009). Cronbach's alpha for the present study was .92 ($M = 84.92$, $SD = 16.44$).

Organizational commitment was operationalized with the 15-item Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ; Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979). The items were

Table 1. Correlations Between Power Distance, Communication, and Work-Related Outcomes

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Approach	—						
2. Avoidant	–.66**	—					
3. Communication apprehension	–.32**	.48**	—				
4. Organizational commitment	.07	.32**	.26**	—			
5. Job satisfaction	.09	.31**	.28**	.52**	—		
6. Power distance	–.28**	.50**	.52**	.33**	.36**	—	
7. Communication satisfaction	–.20**	.24**	.27**	.31**	.29**	.32**	—

*$p < .05$. **$p < .001$.

measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. The scale is intended to measure employee attachment to the organization, for example, "I am proud to tell others that I am part of the organization." Prior studies reported reliabilities ranging from .82 to .92 and strong validity (Barge & Schlueter, 1988). Cronbach's alpha for the current study was .88 ($M = 59.98$, $SD = 10.53$).

Communication satisfaction was measured by the 19-item Interpersonal Communication Satisfaction Inventory (ICSI) developed by Hecht (1978). A 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*) was used. A slight modification was made to the original scale with a lead in sentence (When communicating with my supervisor I feel . . .) preceding each statement. Prior studies reported reliabilities ranging from .72 to .93 and strong validity (Rubin, Palmgreen, & Sypher, 1994). Cronbach's alpha for the current study was .89 ($M = 75.14$, $SD = 11.67$).

Job satisfaction was measured by the eight-item Abridged Job In General Scale (AJIG; Russell et al., 2004). A 5-point Likert-type response format (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*) was used in the current study instead of the original scale formatting (i.e., using 0 for *no*, 1 for *?* and 3 for *yes*) to be consistent with other parts of the questionnaire. The scale is composed of single words or short statements regarding an employee's overall perception of his or her job (e.g., good, better than most, undesirable). Prior research (Russell et al., 2004) indicated that the AJIG Scale had strong reliability with a Cronbach's coefficient alpha of .92. Cronbach's alpha for the current study was .85 ($M = 30.29$, $SD = 5.97$).

Results

The hypothesized model advanced here predicted positive relationships between power distance and Mexican employees' CA and their use of avoidance messages. Results of Pearson's correlational analysis supported the hypothesis by indicating significant positive relationships between power distance and CA ($r = .52$, $p < .001$), and between power distance and the use of avoidance messages ($r = .50$, $p < .001$; see Table 1 for all the correlational results).

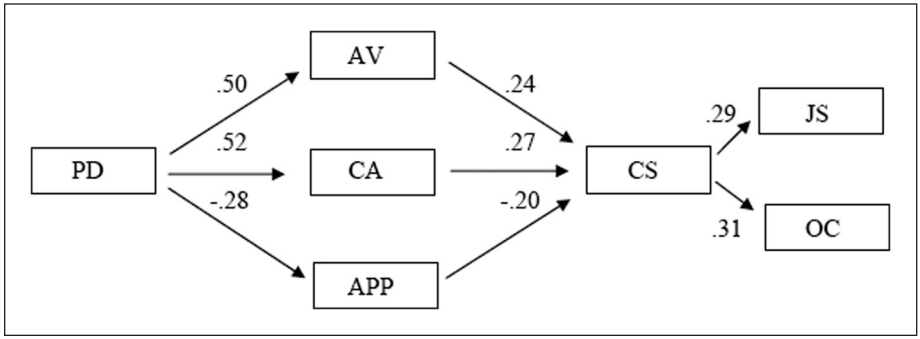

Figure 1. Results of the hypothesized model
Note: PD = power distance; AV = avoidance-oriented behaviors; APP = approach-oriented behaviors; CA = communication apprehension; CS = communication satisfaction; JS = job satisfaction; OC = organizational commitment.

The model also predicted a negative relationship between power distance and Mexican employees' use of approach messages. Results of Pearson's correlational analysis supported the hypothesis by indicating a significant negative relationship between the variables ($r = -.28$, $p < .001$).

The next set of relationships found in the hypothesized model predicted positive relationships between CS and Mexican employees' CA and their use of avoidance messages. Results of Pearson's correlational analysis supported the hypothesis by indicating significant positive relationships between CS and CA ($r = .29$, $p < .001$), and between CS and the use of avoidance messages ($r = .27$, $p < .001$; see Figure 1 for the results of the hypothesized model).

The model also predicted a negative relationship between the CS of Mexican employees' and their use of approach messages. Results of Pearson's correlational analysis supported the hypothesis by indicating a significant negative relationship between the variables ($r = -.20$, $p < .001$).

The final set of relationships found in the hypothesized model predicted positive relationships between CS and Mexican employees' job satisfaction and their organizational commitment. Results of Pearson's correlational analysis supported the hypothesis by indicating significant positive relationships between CS and job satisfaction ($r = .29$, $p < .001$), and between CS and organizational commitment ($r = .31$, $p < .001$).

Discussion

The value of examining the communication interactions that take place within Mexican organizations is of interest here based on the changes to U.S. businesses that accompanied the North American Free Trade Act (NAFTA), which has dramatically increased commercial interaction between the United States and Mexico. According to the U.S. Department of State (1999), there is an increasing interest for U.S. firms

to get a better insight into the internal functioning of Mexican organizations; specifically, into the determinants of their employees' communication behavior. Condon (1997) indicated that hundreds of thousands of U.S. citizens live and work in Mexico, and the U.S.-Mexican border is regularly crossed in both directions by more people than any other international border in the world. Wild, Wild, and Han (2006) commented on the level of U.S. investment in Mexico, particularly in the assembly sector named "the Maquiladoras" where U.S. firms ship parts to organizations located in Mexico (both U.S. and Mexican owned), attracted by the low wages, to assemble products such as refrigerators, calculators, laptop computers, and mobile phones. With such a significant number of U.S. managers and Mexicans interacting in a work environment, an appreciation of each others' management practices and culture has become increasingly important for those involved.

Despite this, research indicates that nearly 40% of U.S. firms send their managers to other countries without any form of cultural preparation, and those who did receive training, on average, managed less than 1 day (Windham International & National Foreign Trade Council, 1996). In response, the current study sought to examine the communication interactions between Mexican employees working for Mexican-owned organizations located in Mexico to examine whether congruency between the societal culture (macro) and the organizational culture (micro) influenced employees' communication behaviors, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment.

The first finding of interest involves the degree of power distance found within Mexican organizations. Scores more than 4 on a 5-point scale was the reported degree of power distance in the Mexican organizations included in this study. This finding is in line with Hofstede's (1983, 2001) work, indicating that Mexico ranks fifth in power distance out of the 50 countries studied. Also, as indicated by the TIM, the micro-culture of Mexican organizations appears to mimic the societal culture (macro) of Mexico. Continuing with the influence of high power distance, CA and avoidance messages were positively related to power distance. In other words, it appears that high power distance in the organizational setting results in employees' experiencing CA, and using avoidance messages. Given that being told what to do by those in power is the preferred communication condition for Mexican employees, these findings appear to be in line with cultural norms.

Of additional interest here were the findings indicating that CA, and the use of avoidance messages were both positively related to the CS of Mexican workers. These findings appear to be counterintuitive from a U.S. perspective, where power distance, CA, and the use of avoidance messages are all considered to be negative conditions that should be avoided. Although these findings appear to differ from a U.S. point of view, according to the TIM (Infante, 1987) these findings are actually expected and a desired condition for workers in Mexico. The question that remains unanswered is how could such contradictory conditions be considered as desirable conditions?

Two possible explanations for these findings will be discussed in detail here. The notion that the current findings appear counterintuitive stem from an ethnocentric (e.g., the belief that ones own culture is superior to others) view from a U.S. perspective that

places myopic value judgments on these findings from one cultural perspective. It is possible that in high power distance organizations such as those found in Mexico, employees perceive CA and the use of avoidance messages differently than do the employees in U.S. firms. As the results suggest here, CA and the use of avoidance messages are not considered to be a negative condition at all. In fact, such conditions and behaviors are an expected part of work life that is the result of being told what to do and how by those in power. Furthermore, it could be extrapolated that CA and the use of avoidance messages are actually the preferred state of being for Mexican workers.

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The second possible way to better understand the current findings may be explained by expectancy violations theory (EVT), which originally focused on nonverbal violations and was later expanded to include other behaviors such as verbal communication (Burgoon, 1978). In essence, EVT explains how people evaluate normative behavior violations. There are three main assumptions of EVT. First, people have expectations about how individuals are supposed to behave in any given situation. Depending on the context, individuals have ideas about what constitutes normative behavior in different situations. For example, in the case of Mexican workers it is expected that their supervisor will tell them what to do and how. This one-way downward style of communication meets the Mexican workers' expectations. Second, when people violate our expectations of behavior, it causes arousal. Psychological arousal occurs after the point of violation. Basically, when someone does something we do not expect them to do, we take notice and pay attention. This would refer to a U.S. supervisor, without training, managing Mexican employees as if they were still in the United States by including employees in decision making, soliciting input, and allowing a level of autonomy and empowerment. If such behaviors were engaged in by a supervisor in Mexico he or she would violate the Mexican employees' expectations of how a supervisor should behave. Third, after an expectancy violation, individuals make an evaluation. In the minds of Mexican workers, value judgments are made about the expectancy violation and then they label the violation as good or bad. Using the prior example of a U.S. supervisor, such a deviation from the Mexican workers' expectations about how a supervisor should behave would likely be labeled as bad.

These findings do not suggest that U.S. managers who cross cultures into Mexican organizations should strive to promote CA and the use of avoidance messages. Instead, it suggests that managers should strive to meet the expectations Mexican workers have in regard to the behaviors of their supervisors. It is important to remember that Mexican

workers believe that their supervisors know more than them and care about them and their families, while also having the organization's best interest in mind. As a result, each time a supervisor tells them what to do and how, they are ensuring the Mexican workers that if they follow these instructions they will continue to have a job (because the organization will be profitable) and in return, they can continue providing for their families. With this way of thinking, it is unlikely that Mexican employees would perceive not being solicited for their input or included in decision making as anything but the expected way of being and any violation of these expectations would be considered as a violation and bad.

The final finding of interest involves the positive relationships between CS and the job satisfaction and organizational commitment of Mexican workers. Prior research involving U.S. organizations have come to the same conclusion, that is, CS is an important factor to consider with respect to the job satisfaction and organizational commitment of workers (however, as addressed in the prior section of this discussion, the behaviors that predicate CS may differ from culture to culture and the definitions of CS may differ with respect to what is considered satisfactory communication).

Limitations and Future Directions

Although this study shed light on the communication practices within Mexican organizations and the value of cultural congruency, it is not without its limitations. One limitation of the current study is the lack of a clear explanation from the employees' standpoint as to their perceptions of what is to be excluded from communication interactions involving work-related decisions. Do these employees feel subjugated by their plight or are they content with their subordinate position? Or, is the acceptance of being subjugated in the workplace simply the result of cultural expectations. Unlike the current study, many of the more recent intercultural studies have used discourse analysis to evaluate the communication behaviors within or between members from the same or differing cultures offering some unique rich findings (see, Aritz & Walker, 2010; Carbaugh, 2007). Therefore, a qualitative component to the current study could offer greater insight into our understanding of the communication behaviors of Mexican supervisors and their workers and the expectations of the culture. A final limitation with the current study involves the sample size. The sample size needed to be larger for an accurate analysis of geographic information gathered. For example, do findings differ from workers in Southern Mexico to those who work in Northern Mexico? Also, are there further differences between geographic location and the work setting (e.g., education vs. manufacturing)? Future researchers may want to address these limitations in their research.

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Bio

Paul E. Madlock, PhD, is an assistant professor in the College of Business Administration at Texas A&M International University.