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Culture and Negotiation

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This article develops a model of how culture affects negotiation processes and outcomes. It begins with a description of negotiation from a Western perspective: confrontational, focused on transactions or the resolution of disputes, evaluated in terms of integrative and distributive outcomes. It proposes that power and information processes are fundamental to negotiations and that one impact of culture on negotiations is through these processes. The cultural value of individualism versus collectivism is linked to goals in negotiation; the cultural value of egalitarianism versus hierarchy is linked to power in negotiation; and the cultural value for high versus low context communication is linked to information sharing in negotiation. The article describes why inter-cultural negotiations pose significant strategic challenges, but concludes that negotiators who are motivated to search for information, and are flexible about how that search is carried out, can reach high-quality negotiated outcomes.

Cet article présente un modèle sur la manière dont la culture influence les processus et les résultats d'une négociation. Il commence par une description d'une négociation d'un point de vue occidental: confrontante, centrée sur les transactions ou la résolution de conflits, évaluée par le caractère intégratif et distributif de l'issue. Il propose que les processus de pouvoir et d'information sont fondamentaux dans les négociations et que c'est par ces processus que la culture a un impact sur les négociations. La valeur culturelle individualisme-collectivisme est liée aux buts de la négociation; la valeur culturelle égalitarisme-hiérarchisation est liée au pouvoir dans la négociation; et la valeur culturelle communication contextuelle forte ou faible est liée au partage de l'information dans la négociation. Cet article décrit pourquoi les négociations inter-culturelles présentent des défis stratégiques significatifs, mais conclut que les négociateurs qui sont motivés à chercher l'information et qui sont flexibles dans la manière de la chercher peuvent arriver à obtenir des résultats de grande qualité.

Breakdowns in negotiations when parties are from different cultures are invariably attributed to cultural differences. Though some of these breakdowns may not fairly be attributable to culture, others undoubtedly have cultural origins. This article develops a conceptual model to explain how culture impacts negotiation. It draws on previous research on culture and on negotiation to develop an understanding of how culture affects negotiation processes and outcomes. The article begins with a review of fundamental concepts in the literature on negotiation and culture. These concepts provide a language for what we know and what we do not know about culture and negotiation and allow us to build a model of factors affecting inter-cultural negotiation process and outcome.

A MODEL OF INTER-CULTURAL NEGOTIATION

Negotiation

Negotiation is a form of social interaction. It is the process by which two or more parties try to resolve perceived incompatible goals (Carnevale & Pruitt, 1992). In order to understand the effect of culture on

negotiation, it is useful to have a mental model of negotiation. What is it that people mean when they say they negotiate? What is involved in negotiating? What is a good outcome in negotiation? What does it take to get a good outcome? What goes wrong in a negotiation that has a poor outcome? However, if culture has an effect on negotiation, the mental models of negotiators from one culture may not map on to the mental models of negotiators from another culture, making the specification of a single mental model problematic. There are two ways to approach this problem of specifying a mental model of negotiation. One is to specify the model in use in one culture and then compare and contrast its elements with elements of models of negotiation from other cultures. Alternatively, we can specify the mental models of negotiation in many different cultures and aggregate their common and unique elements. The latter approach is less likely to overlook culturally unique aspects of negotiation, but requires the prior existence or current construction of many culturally emic (unique) models of negotiation. (See Brett, Tinsley, Janssens, Barsness, & Lytle, 1997 for a discussion of these two approaches to designing cross-cultural research.) This article relies on the first approach because there is a well-specified model of negotiation grounded in Western theory and empirical

research by scholars such as Howard Raiffa, Morton Deutsch, Dean Pruitt, Peter Carnevale, and Max Bazerman and Margaret Neale. In taking the Western mental model of negotiation as a starting point, no assumption is made that the Western model is etic (generalizable to all cultures).

Direct Confrontation. Negotiation involves direct confrontation, either face-to-face, or electronic, of principles and or their agents. This is clearly the first of many Western biases in the model. Negotiations can be, and in many cultures frequently are, carried out indirectly through third parties. These third parties may act as agents (representatives of the principles), or mediators (neutral third parties trying to facilitate an agreement), or they may act as go-betweens, conveying information among parties and others with interests in the outcome. This is not to say that such indirect third-party activity never occurs in cultures like the US, only that it is not usually what cultural members think about when they think about negotiation. The article in this Special Issue by Peter Carnevale and Dong Won Choi deals with third parties in negotiations.

Types of Negotiations. Negotiations may be transactional with buyers and sellers, or directed toward the resolution of conflict or disputes. Both types of negotiation revolve around a perceived incompatibility of goals (Carnevale & Pruitt, 1992). Negotiators engaged in a transaction are determining whether, despite this anticipated incompatibility of goals, they can negotiate the terms of a relationship that is more favourable than any they believe they can negotiate with alternative buyers or sellers. Conflict or dispute resolution negotiations imply that some blocking of goal attainment has already occurred. Negotiators resolving disputes are determining what can be done about the blocked goal. A dispute is a rejected claim (Folstein, Abel, & Sarat, 1980–81), distinguished from the more general term, conflict (perceived goal incompatibility), by its explicit nature.

Another difference between transactional and conflict management negotiations is the degree to which the negotiators bring emotion to the table. In transactional negotiations, negotiators may try to use positive emotion, such as ingratiation, or feign emotional irrationality to influence outcomes. Negotiators may also become angry during the course of the negotiation. When conflict is the reason for the negotiation, however, negative emotion precedes the negotiation.

Conflict within relationships and transactions to construct relationships occur in and between all cultures. However, every culture has evolved its own ways of managing conflict and transactions.

Distributive and Integrative Agreements. The result of a transactional or conflict resolution negotiation may be a purely distributive agreement or an integrative agreement, or an impasse. Distributive agreements divide

a fixed set of resources among the parties. The division can be equal, which is sometimes what is meant by the term “compromise,” or unequal. Integrative agreements distribute an enhanced set of resources. Few negotiations are pure win-lose situations (Deutsch, 1973). In most situations there are opportunities to expand the resources to be divided, or to integrate, either by adding issues to the table or fractionating a single negotiation issue into parts. With multiple issues, negotiators may be able to trade low-priority issues for high-priority issues, or identify compatible issues that bring value to both parties.

Why should negotiators care about integrative agreements when most fail to realize integrative potential (Thompson, 1998)? There are two important reasons. First, integration can help parties avoid impasse. Second, when parties reach agreements that are suboptimal, they leave resources on the table that neither party is able to recover (Walton & McKersie, 1965).

Processes That Lead to Distributive and Integrative Agreements. The processes by which distributive and integrative agreements are negotiated differ slightly in transactions and the resolution of disputes. To understand these negotiation processes we need to understand how power and information are used in negotiation.

Power is the ability to make the other party concede when that party prefers not to concede (Ury, Brett, & Goldberg, 1993). In transactional negotiations power is typically the economic power of alternatives. Parties' economic power is a function of their dependency on each other (Emerson, 1962). The party with the best alternative to a negotiated agreement (BATNA) (Fisher, Ury, & Patton, 1991) is the more powerful. Economic power may vary as a function of the market (free market economy cultures) and of each party's social status within the market (controlled economy cultures). Normative standards of fairness (Fisher et al., 1991) may also be used to reach distributive agreements. Examples of standards of fairness include relying on past practice, or the agreements reached with other buyers or suppliers. In the resolution of disputes, in addition to economic and social power, and normative standards of fairness, legal standards may be the dominant standard used to determine the distribution of resources.

Two types of information are relevant in negotiation: information about parties' power and information about parties' interests, or the reasons why they take the positions they do (Fisher et al., 1991). Information about power is relevant to both distributive and integrative agreements, because in any integrative agreement, there is still a distribution. Information about interests is relevant to constructing integrative agreements.

With information about relative power, the negotiator can judge (a) when to walk away from a negotiation with confidence that no deal is possible, (b) when to press for more in a negotiation, or (c) when to accept an offer. However, acquiring such information may not be a simple task. First, power is a perception, a psychological

representation of the strength of one's position in the negotiation. Like other perceptions, perceptions of power are likely to be biased by egocentricism (thinking you have more power than you would be assigned as having by a neutral observer), anchoring (being influenced by the persuasive arguments the other side uses about its power), and framing (being influenced by role, for example buyer or seller, or some other contextual variable) (Neale & Bazerman, 1991). Second, perceptions of power are subject to influences such as persuasion, ingratiation, substantiation, and appeals to sympathy (Lewicki, Saunders, & Minton, 1997; Weingart, Thompson, Bazerman, & Carroll, 1990).

The creation of resources that is the hallmark of integrative agreements rests on the identification of trade-offs and mutually beneficial alternatives. To realize integrative potential, negotiators need to know both their own and the other party's priorities and interests. Priority information identifies what issues are more and what issues are less important to a negotiator. Interest information identifies why an issue is important or unimportant (Fisher et al., 1991). When different interests are uncovered, trade-offs can be negotiated. When mutual interests are uncovered, both parties can gain. There are two ways to acquire such information leading to integrative agreements. Parties can engage in reciprocal information sharing about preferences, priorities, and interests underlying positions (Pruitt, 1981). Alternatively, parties can engage in heuristic trial and error processing, during which they may propose alternative deals, slowly working their way toward an integrative agreement (Pruitt, 1981).

Recent empirical research suggests that cultures differ with respect to the basis of power in negotiation (Brett & Okumura, 1998) and appropriate standards of fairness (Leung, 1997). Cultures also differ with respect to information sharing, both in the extent to which information is viewed as important in negotiation (Brett et al., 1998), and in the approach to sharing information relevant to reaching integrative agreements (Adair, Okumura, & Brett, 1998c). Some cultures share the information about interests and priorities needed to reach integrative agreements directly, while others share that information indirectly, and still others not at all (Adair et al., 1998a). Other research shows cultural differences in the emphasis placed on interests, rights, and power in dispute resolution (Tinsley, 1997, 1998).

Culture

Culture is the unique character of a social group. It encompasses the values and norms shared by members of that group. It is the economic, social, political, and religious institutions that direct and control current group members and socialize new members (Lytle, Brett, Barsness, Tinsley, & Janssens, 1995). All of these elements of culture can affect social interactions like negotiations. Cultural values direct group members' attention to what is more and less important. Cultural

norms define what is appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. Cultural values and norms provide the philosophy underlying the society's institutions. At the same time cultural institutions preserve cultural values and norms, give them authority, and provide a context for social interaction.

There are many different cultural values, norms, and institutions. Not all relate to negotiation. However, many do because they provide a basis for interpreting situations (this is a negotiation, therefore I behave) and a basis for interpreting the behaviours of others (he or she threatened me, therefore I should . . .) (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). Cultural values that our research indicates are relevant to norms and strategies for negotiation include individualism versus collectivism, egalitarianism versus hierarchy, and direct versus indirect communications. Other values, no doubt, are also relevant.

Individualism versus Collectivism. Individualism versus collectivism refers to the extent to which a society treats individuals as autonomous, or as embedded in their social groups (Schwartz, 1994). In individualistic cultures, norms and institutions promote the autonomy of the individual. Individual accomplishments are rewarded and revered by economic and social institutions, and legal institutions protect individual rights. In collectivist cultures, norms and institutions promote interdependence of individuals through emphasis on social obligations. Sacrifice of personal needs for the greater good is rewarded and legal institutions place the greater good of the collective above the rights of the individual. Political and economic institutions reward classes of people as opposed to individuals.

The way a society treats people affects the way people self-construe and the way they act toward and interact with each other. People in all cultures distinguish between in-groups, of which they are members, and out-groups, of which they are not (Turner, 1987). In collectivist cultures self-identity is interdependent with in-group membership, but in individualistic cultures self-identity consists of attributes that are independent of in-group membership (Marcus & Kitayama, 1991). Perhaps because collectivists identify more strongly with their in-groups, they are said to be more attuned to the needs of others than individualists (Schweder & Bourne, 1982) and to make stronger in-group/out-group distinctions than individualists (Gudykunst et al., 1992).

Individualism versus collectivism, according to Schwartz (1994, p. 140), reflects cultures' basic preferences and priorities for "some goals rather than others." Goals are motivating; they direct behaviour and sustain effort (Locke & Latham, 1990). We have found that individualists, because of their strong self-interests, set high personal goals in negotiation (Brett & Okumura, 1998). We think these goals motivate individualists to reject acceptable, but suboptimal, agreements and to continue to search among alternative possible agreements for one that best meets the individualists' self-interests.

Because of their identification with in-groups, collectivists' goals should be aligned with their in-groups' goals. If the other negotiator is an in-group member, goal alignment should generate cooperative behaviour in negotiations, whereby parties search together for a mutually satisfying agreement. However, if the other negotiator is an out-group member, as is likely in any inter-cultural negotiation, goals are unlikely to be aligned and competitive behaviour may ensue. In Prisoners' Dilemma games negotiators with individualistic motivational orientations do not change their behaviour depending upon with whom they are interacting (Kelley & Stahelski, 1970). However, in some recent multi-party negotiation research, some individualists changed to a cooperative strategy, perhaps because they were confronted with the possibility of an impasse (Weingart & Brett, 1998), suggesting that individualists may be pragmatic. Negotiators with cooperative motivational orientations vary their behavior, depending on the orientation of the other negotiator (Kelley & Stahelski, 1970). They cooperate when they are dealing with other cooperative negotiators, but in dyads will compete when dealing with negotiators with individualist or competitive orientations.

The distinction between individualistic and competitive behaviour is important. The individualist goes his own way regardless of the behaviour of the other, but may be affected by the structure of the situation. The competitor, like the cooperator, is sensitive to the needs of others, and the competitor seeks to maximize the difference between his own and other's outcomes (Messick & McClintock, 1968). This is a very different orientation from the individualist, who essentially is unconcerned with how well or how poorly the negotiation is going for the other party, so long as it is going well for himself.

Egalitarianism versus Hierarchy. Egalitarianism versus hierarchy refers to the extent to which a culture's social structure is flat (egalitarian) versus differentiated into ranks (hierarchical) (Schwartz, 1994). In hierarchical cultures, social status implies social power. Social superiors are granted power and privilege. Social inferiors are obligated to defer to social superiors and comply with their requests. However, social superiors also have an obligation to look out for the needs of social inferiors (Leung, 1997). No such obligation exists in egalitarian societies, where social boundaries are permeable and superior social status may be short-lived.

Conflict within hierarchical cultures poses a threat to the social structure, since the norm in such a culture is not to challenge the directives of high status members. Thus, conflict between members of different social ranks is likely to be less frequent in hierarchical than egalitarian cultures (Leung, 1997). Conflict between members of the same social rank is more likely to be handled by deference to a superior than by direct confrontation between social equals (Leung, 1997). So, hierarchy reduces conflict by providing norms for interaction, primarily by channelling conflict that does break out to

superiors. The decision by the high status third party reinforces his/her authority without necessarily conferring differentiated status on the contestants as would be the case in a negotiation in which one party won and the other lost.

Conflict within egalitarian cultures also poses a threat to the social structure, but the egalitarian nature of the culture empowers conflicting members to resolve the conflict themselves. Egalitarian cultures support direct, face-to-face negotiations, mediation or facilitation by a peer, and group decision making, to resolve conflict. An agreement between two disputing parties may not distribute resources equally. One party may claim more and the other less. Yet, differentiated status associated with successful claiming in one negotiation may not translate into permanent changes in social status. There are two reasons for this. First, there are few avenues in egalitarian societies for precedent setting. Second, social status is only stable until the next negotiation.

Thus, one implication for negotiations of the cultural value, egalitarianism versus hierarchy, is the way conflict is handled in a culture. A second implication is the view of power in negotiations.

Negotiators from egalitarian and hierarchical societies have rather different views of the bases of power in negotiations (Brett & Okumura, 1998). Consistent with the transitory notion of social structure that is characteristic of egalitarian societies, power in negotiations in egalitarian cultures tends to be evaluated with respect to the situation under negotiation and the alternatives if no agreement can be reached. Every negotiator has a BATNA (best alternative to negotiated agreement). BATNAs are not fixed. If, in analyzing the alternatives, the negotiator is dissatisfied with her BATNA, she may invest in action to improve her BATNA by seeking another alternative. In transactional negotiations, parties' BATNAs are frequently unrelated. The buyer has an alternative seller with whom to negotiate and the seller has an alternative buyer with whom to negotiate. However, in dispute resolution negotiations one party may be able to impose its BATNA on the other. For example, in a dispute over the terms of a contract, the defendant may not simply be able to walk away from a negotiation that has reached an impasse, but will have to defend himself in court, which is the claimant's BATNA.

Negotiators in egalitarian cultures refer to BATNA or any other source of power in transactional negotiations relatively infrequently, so long as negotiations are moving toward agreement (Adair et al., 1998c). These negotiators prefer to focus on the issues under negotiation, sharing information about priorities and interests, and noting similarities and differences (Adair et al., 1998a).

In hierarchical societies, interpersonal relationships are vertical. In almost all social relationships a difference in status exists based on age, sex, education, organization, or position in the organization (Graham, Johnston, & Kamins, 1998). Social status confers social power and

knowledge of status dictates how people will interact. In within-culture negotiations, when parties' social status is known, there may be little need to negotiate the relative distribution of resources. However, when relative status is in doubt, negotiators must somehow determine each party's relative status, and thus the distribution of resources. Research on transactional negotiations shows that negotiators from hierarchical cultures are more likely than negotiators from egalitarian cultures to endorse as normative and to use all types of power in negotiation: status, BATNA, and persuasion (Adair et al., 1998a; Brett et al., 1998).

High- versus Low-context Communication. High-versus low-context communication refers to the degree to which within-culture communications are indirect versus direct (Hall, 1976; Ting-Toomey, 1988). In high-context cultures little information is in the message itself. Instead, the context of the communication stimulates pre-existing knowledge in the receiver. In high-context cultures meaning is inferred rather than directly interpreted from the communication. In low-context cultures information is contained in explicit messages, and meaning is conveyed without nuance and is context free. Communication in low-context cultures is action oriented and solution minded. The implications of the information are laid out in further detailed communications.

Information is the central factor affecting the degree to which negotiated agreements are integrative. Differences between parties in priorities and interests provide one source of integrative potential. Compatibility with respect to issues provides another. If parties are going to realize integrative potential, they must learn about the other party's interests, preferences, and priorities. Negotiation research has shown that integrative agreements may result from information sharing about preferences and priorities (Olekals, Smith, & Walsh, 1996; Pruitt, 1981; Weingart et al., 1990), or from heuristic trial-and-error search (Pruitt & Lewis, 1975; Tutzauer & Roloff, 1988). Information sharing about preferences and priorities is a direct information sharing approach. Questions are asked and answered in a give-and-take fashion as both sides slowly develop an understanding of what issues are mutually beneficial, what issues are more important to one side than the other, and what issues are purely distributive.

Heuristic trial-and-error search is an indirect information sharing approach. It occurs in negotiations when parties trade proposals back and forth across the bargaining table. When one party rejects the other's proposal, and offers its own, the first party may infer what was wrong with the proposal from the way the second party changed it in making its own proposal. Multi-issue proposals provide a great deal of indirect information about preferences and priorities because the integrative trade-offs are contained within the proposal. Our research shows that negotiators from low-context cultures who share information directly are as capable of negotiating integrative agreements as negotiators from

high-context cultures who share information indirectly (Brett & Okumura, 1998).

The cultural value for high- versus low-context communication may also be related to the willingness of parties in conflict to confront and negotiate directly versus to avoid confrontation and conceal ill feelings, or to confront indirectly by involving third parties (Leung, 1997; Tinsley, 1997; Ting-Toomey, 1988). Most of the research regarding confrontation versus avoidance is survey research of preferences for conflict management processes or descriptions of actual conflict management behaviours. Attributions for these preferences are as frequently made to collectivism as to high-context communication. (See Leung, 1997, for a review.) The cultural value for egalitarianism versus hierarchy also serves as a context for confrontation versus nonconfrontation in negotiations. In research comparing Hong Kong Chinese and US intra-cultural negotiators, we placed parties in a simulated, face-to-face dispute resolution setting, perhaps an uncomfortable setting for the Hong Kong Chinese (Tinsley & Brett, 1998). We found that during the 45-minute negotiation, the Hong Kong Chinese negotiators resolved fewer issues and were more likely to involve a third party than were the US negotiators (Tinsley & Brett, 1998).

MODEL OF CULTURE AND NEGOTIATION

When people from two different cultural groups negotiate, each brings to the table his or her way of thinking about the issues to be negotiated and the process of negotiation. Some of that thinking is affected by the negotiator's cultural group membership and the ways in which issues are typically assessed and negotiations carried out within that cultural group. Figure 1 represents inter-cultural negotiations as a function of differences between parties with respect to preferences on issues and negotiation strategies.

Cultural values may result in preferences on issues that are quite distinct. For example, negotiators from cultures that value tradition may be less enthusiastic about economic development that threatens to change valued ways of life, than negotiators from cultures that value change and development. The same values that generate cultural differences in preferences may also act as cultural blinders. Members of one culture expect preferences to be compatible, and cannot understand the rationality of the other party, whose views on the same issue are at odds with their own. It is generally always unwise in negotiation to label the other party as irrational. Such labelling encourages persuasion to get the other party to adopt the first's view of the situation, rather than the search for trade-offs that are the foundation of integrative agreements. There is opportunity in differences, or what is represented in Fig. 1 as integrative potential.

Cultural values and norms also may affect negotiators' strategic negotiation processes. For example, negotiators from cultures where direct, explicit communications are preferred may share information by stating and reciprocating preferences and priorities, by commenting on similarities and differences, and by giving direct feedback. Negotiators from cultures where the norm is to communicate indirectly and infer meaning may share information by making multi-issue proposals and inferring priorities from subtle changes in proposals. In our research contrasting US and Japanese negotiators, we found that the Japanese were using a relatively large number of proposals, compared to the US negotiators, and the US negotiators were using a whole array of direct communications relatively more frequently than the Japanese (Adair et al., 1998c).

Figure 1 suggests that when the strategies negotiators bring to the table clash, the negotiation process is likely to be less efficient, and agreements are likely to be sub-optimal. We found, for example, that Japanese intra-cultural negotiators, using indirect communications, and US intra-cultural negotiators, using direct communications, reached similarly efficient agreements. However, when Japanese expatriate managers negotiated with US managers, agreements were suboptimal. Japanese inter-cultural negotiators understood the US negotiators' priorities, because the US negotiators were sharing information directly. The US negotiators did not understand the Japanese negotiators' priorities, even though the inter-cultural Japanese negotiators shut down their cul-

ture's normative indirect approach to information sharing and tried to adapt to the US strategy of direct information sharing (Adair et al., 1998c; Brett & Okumura, 1998).

There is not much research on what happens when negotiators' initial strategic approaches to bargaining are different, much less when those strategies are linked to cultural differences. In the negotiations literature generally, there is more theorizing than empirical research on incompatible negotiation strategies. This theorizing tends to argue that negotiators must adapt to each other and develop a common "frame" or approach to negotiations, if an agreement is to be reached (Drake & Donohue, 1996; Pinkley & Northcraft, 1994). Weiss (1994) argues that the party who is most familiar with the other's culture should adapt. This pattern of adaptation is consistent with our US-Japanese research. However, we note that the adaptation was not sufficient to generate joint gains. Weiss's perspective also ignores other criteria, like parties' relative power, that might be used as a basis for adaptation. Then again there is the problem of how much adaptation is necessary. Research has identified cultural differences with respect to power, goals, and information sharing in negotiation. Is adaptation uniform across all areas of cultural differences, or is it easier to adapt information sharing strategies than power strategies? Is the adaptation short-lived for the single negotiation, or does the enhanced negotiation strategy continue to be available to the adapting negotiator? Do negotiators even realize that they are adapting?

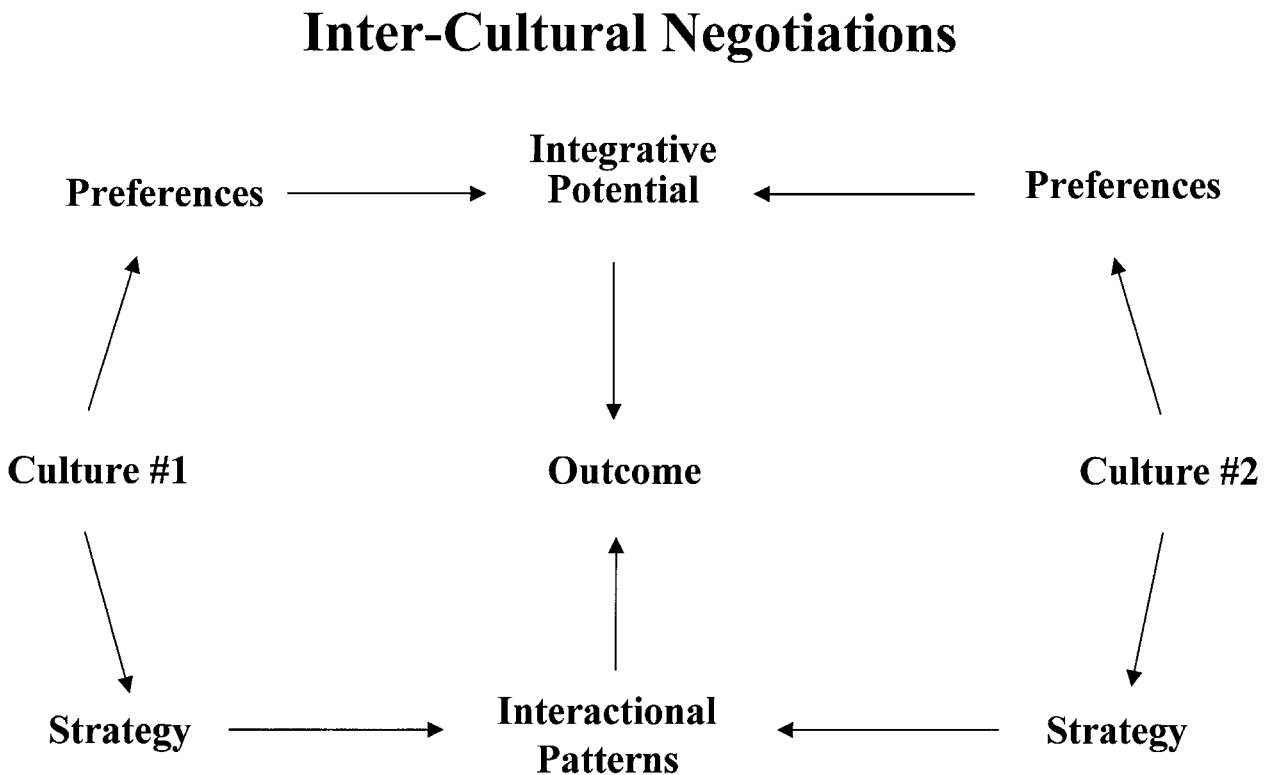


FIG. 1. A model of inter-cultural negotiation.

WHEN CULTURES CLASH IN NEGOTIATION

The practical questions for the cross-cultural negotiator are how the party across the bargaining table is likely to construe the issues and what strategies he or she is likely to use. Culture can provide some insight into these questions. At the same time there are pitfalls of over-reliance on cultural expectations.

Research has shown that there are fundamental differences between cultures with respect to norms for negotiation (Brett et al., 1998) and behaviour in negotiations (Adair et al., 1998a; Tinsley, 1997, 1998). Furthermore, these differences in norms and behaviour are correlated with cultural values (Brett et al., 1998; Tinsley, 1997). Knowing the links between culture and negotiation strategies, and knowing the other party's cultural background, may help reduce uncertainty about issue construal and strategy. There are a number of sources that provide descriptive information about culture and cultural values including Hofstede (1980), Schwartz (1994), Hall (1976), and Morrison, Conaway, and Borden (1994). There are also descriptive accounts of how people from different cultures negotiate (e.g. March, 1990). The best of these is the new edited volume by Leung and Tjosvold (1998), describing negotiation norms in cultures around the Pacific Rim.

These sources agree that there is a major cultural divide between East and West, with the West's profile generally being individualism, egalitarianism, and low-context communication, and the East's profile being collectivism, hierarchy, and high-context communication. However, East-West distinctions at the level of cultural values grossly oversimplify more fine-grained cultural differences in negotiation norms. There are distinct normative differences within regions (Leung & Tjosvold, 1998).

On the other hand, just because negotiators are from different cultures does not necessarily mean that their negotiation strategies will clash and their agreements will be suboptimal. Distinct social groups may have similar cultural values and members may find the inter-cultural negotiation process trouble-free. In addition, not all members of a cultural group with a distinct value profile believe and act consistently with the cultural norm. There is a distribution of cultural traits within a culture. Two negotiators from cultures with distinct but overlapping distributions of cultural characteristics may find they have very similar cultural values and norms, despite the differences in their cultures. If these negotiators are naïve about cultural differences, they may not anticipate differences in the negotiation process and not experience them. On the other hand, if they hold cultural stereotypes, their ability to recognize their fundamental compatibility may be biased by their stereotypes, and make the negotiation process more difficult than it otherwise would be.

This observation raises the troubling issue of whether knowing about the other party's cultural approach to

negotiation is useful information or not. Such knowledge is harmful if it stimulates biased perceptions and inappropriate adjustments of negotiation strategy. It is useful to the extent that it facilitates accurate attributions and allows a negotiator to take the perspective of the other negotiator and adjust her strategy.

When parties are motivated to reach an agreement, much can go on during the course of a negotiation to overcome individual, contextual, and cultural differences in negotiation strategy. Our research has identified three key factors leading to successful integrative and distributive agreements that are affected by culture. The first is a value for information sharing. The second is a means of searching for information. The third is the motivation to search for information. Cultures vary in the importance negotiators place on information sharing, in negotiators' normative approaches to information search, and in what motivates negotiators to search for information that may lead them to alternatives and better outcomes (Adair et al., 1998a, 1998c; Brett et al., 1998; Brett & Okumura, 1998). As a result, negotiating inter-culturally may pose a significant strategic challenge. Yet, if negotiators remain motivated to search for information on which to build acceptable agreements and are flexible in how that search is conducted, cultural differences can be bridged (Adair, Kopelman, Gillespie, & Brett, 1998b).

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