Sceptics see the influence of culture in negotiations as overstated. There are several reasons for this: the influence of culture is imprecise and hard to measure; the concept is a fluid one and hard to nail down even with the dimensions articulated through research; its boundaries are diffuse (is negotiator behaviour the consequence of personal characteristics or culture?); and in the end aren’t the outcomes of negotiations defined simply by the issues on the table, hard objective facts, economic, legal-technical and power realities rather than any character or culture considerations?

At the frontline, negotiation takes place usually between individuals operating with small support teams. Individuals influence problem-solving processes so it is helpful to have some understanding of individual behaviour and its impact on negotiation and problem-solving processes. Then, in the worlds of diplomacy, peace-making within or between nations, business dealings, and labour-management relations individuals negotiate as representatives on behalf of others. In such instances negotiation processes run along and must be coordinated along many contours – across a bargaining table between individuals; between these individuals and others within the teams they sit with; and within and between stakeholder groups, collectivities, organizations or nations the teams represent. A complex strategic process of mandating, report-backs, intra- and inter-group problem-solving, pressure tactics and concession-making evolves.

Along all these contours the process is essentially about persuasion. Frontline negotiators must be able to influence not only one another to move off positions to achieve a deal, but also those within their own immediate teams and wider constituencies. And groups may have different cultures (shaped by genetic groupings and shared social learning) and are, as a consequence, persuaded differently. Cultural influences shape the manner in which people perceive the world. Negotiators in search of an agreement try at one level to persuade people across a table who may understand the world from a frame of reference quite different from their own, and at another to influence those within their own cultural grouping to change. Beyond the issues under negotiation a complex weave of values and social norms must be navigated. The objective of course is generally not so much to change the other’s culture, but to leverage or limit cultural leanings to achieve a deal on some matter such as the design of a constitution, a trade deal, a difference over territory, a security matter or a wage agreement. In other instances of course (and with greater complexity) problems arise not as a consequence...
of cultural differences of approach, but over aspects of a culture itself. It is not a gap in communications that divides the world over issues such as women’s rights or gay rights for instance.

To what extent is a negotiator in action reflecting a particular culture or simply giving expression to their individual character – and does it matter? Neuroscientists explain human behaviour largely in terms of genetic programming, chemicals in the brain, shaping in the womb and early development experiences (Swaab 2014), but the influence of social learning remains undeniably powerful. And a group’s culture is evolved through processes of social learning (Hofstede and Hofstede 2005; Bandura 1977). Individual personality types are usually understood within the shape of the OCEAN model – openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism – and are the product of genetic hardwiring and social learning. These personality types appear to hold across many cultures (Triandis and Suh 2002). Anyone who has participated in negotiations will have witnessed the influence of individual personalities on the process. An understanding of cultural influences helps understand individual negotiator’s choices and behaviour in relation to their own groups and those they are negotiating with – and is helpful in thinking through the persuasion strategies that are key to effective negotiation.

CULTURE – WHAT IS IT?

Culture has been defined as a form of mental programming, ‘a software of the mind’ that distinguishes groups from one another. Members of cultural groups share distinct patterns of greetings, ways of clothing themselves, eating habits, gender relations, approaches to child-rearing, and to worship. They share symbols (which often only they understand), rituals (such as forms of worship or greetings), heroes with whom they identify as embodying core qualities of their group, and values or preferred standards of behaviour (Hofstede and Hofstede 2005). Culture embodies a set of shared and enduring values, meanings and beliefs of a group orienting its actions - it gives meaning to actions and significance to symbols’ (Faure and Rubin 1993:3).

Huntington (1997) proposes that religion is central to the eight distinct major civilizations he identifies as having survived through time, offering each an overarching cultural coherence across other divides. The ‘political religions’ which displaced the idea of God with ideologies of nationalism or communism also bonded and mobilized followers through ideology, mass rallies, uniforms, songs, chants and rituals (Burleigh 2005).

IDENTITY, UTILITY AND CONFLICT

Culture is key to defining identity groups. Through such sayings as ‘the son of a snake is always a snake’ and ‘even in a hundred years a log can never become a crocodile’ primordialists reflect a belief that social identities (clans, tribes, races) are fixed or zero-sum in nature - and that they generate intractable conflicts. But strong as cultural bonds may be, they are also layered, malleable and expressed contingently. Many people belong to several cultures, the dominance of each being defined by situation. Thus people may share a national culture, be differentiated at another level by regional, ethnic or religious differences, and at other levels by gender, generation, social class linked with education and profession, or affiliation to a work organization or trade union. These are not always in harmony especially within societies undergoing rapid development and change. Individual and group identity choices then depend on the mix of a group in which an interaction is taking place. Thus in a foreign country, a doctor may declare herself a South African; in the company of South African male doctors, argue that she brings a woman’s perspective; or in the company of white doctors that she merits special opportunities for advancement as a black person.

“Conflicts [...] reflect deep cultural divides over values themselves, not just gaps in communicating about them”

Social identity comprises three important elements (Tajfel and Turner):

- **categorization** (in which people place themselves and others into categories thereby framing expectations of each other’s behaviour);
- **identification** (in which people define themselves and are defined by others as belonging to a particular group); and
- **social comparison** (in which people evaluate their worth in relation to other groups).

Markers such as race are still common in identity group definition, not least because they are visible and easy to mobilize around. But definitions of ‘the other’ are essentially social and political rather than biological constructs. We learn our identity through social programming but people still make choices about how
to define themselves in situations, and how to define others. Identity – the definition of self, ‘in-groups’ or ‘us’, and out-groups or ‘the other’ - is therefore subject to a degree of manipulation. Core values (belief systems, religious affiliations) are more resistant to change than practices (modes of dress, consumption patterns, sports and leisure activities).

Processes of categorizing, identifying and comparing are of course not passive – they translate into systems of discrimination and differential access to resources and opportunity. They have utility in meeting human needs for protection, participation, power, privilege and purpose (Zartman, Anstey and Meerts 2012). They inform, and are informed by conflicts. Samuel Huntington has observed ‘we know who we are only when we know who we are not, and often only when we know who we are against’ (Huntington 1998:21).

In short conflict has value in some instances in defining and cohering a group identity. However conflict is not a given between identity groups – for the most part identity groups live harmoniously as neighbours without conflict. Laitin (2006) has argued that only about five of every 10000 potential ethnic conflicts in Africa become violent. Europe following centuries of bloody ethnic wars found a means to survive its ethno-nationalist divides in the project of cooperation that is the European Union (Muller 2008), but of course only after two World Wars.

Class theorists see culture as a form of ‘false consciousness’ used by capitalists to divert attention from real issues of poverty and control and uprisings against owners of the means of production – but class is a form of identity grouping in its own right. In societies cleaved by cultural divides and stratified by class membership of a particular identity group may offer inclusion or exclusion from political power, access to economic opportunity, to marginalization or participation in social affairs, and to meaningful positions of influence. Once one group declares itself by clan, or tribe, or race, or religion it is often difficult for others with whom they interact not to. Once the Kenyan crisis had been declared an ethnic one, Kikuyus and Luo’s mobilized in these social categories for both defensive and offensive purposes. Once whites in South Africa had declared themselves an in-group and installed protections for themselves on the basis of race, it was difficult for resistance movements not to organize around race. There was utility for South Africa’s white population in the political and economic exclusion of the nation’s black population; and there is utility in the continuation of those racial categories for blacks under a banner of redress and transformation. There is utility for blacks in accusing whites of racism – it leverages guilt amongst whites, mobilizes a common bonding amongst blacks as an historically disadvantaged group, sustains a sense of group purpose through the language of ongoing struggle, and keeps critics of poor governance at bay. It is why race is likely to be central in the country’s future – it facilitates a sense of coherence and security within each of the groups involved. There is utility for far-right groups in the USA and across Europe at present in identifying Muslims in general as a security risk. The fear generated by terror attacks fuels polarizing group mobilization strategies based on communal markers – colour, head-coverings, places of worship and prayer rituals – and has value for vote-gathering purposes. As Huntington suggests - people may need difference to define themselves.

CULTURE AND NEGOTIATION

So identity is key to many conflicts and to the use of negotiation in their resolution. Not surprisingly there is a welter of websites offering travellers and business leaders advice on intercultural understanding and tips for how to negotiate with Arabs, or Japanese, or Chinese, or Germans or Kenyans ...

These are not without usefulness – but they are also rich with risk of stereotyping. They usually have foundations in some of the research in the field and direct experience of people working within intercultural environments. In a global economy driven by transnational corporations intercultural negotiation skills are obviously very important.

CAUTIONS WITH CROSS-CULTURAL MEASURES

Several major cautions need to be exercised in understanding measures of culture. These are very well explained by Brett (2007) and Meyer (2014):

1. culture scores are prototypes (measures of central tendency) which can easily (and dangerously) translate into stereotypes;
2. rather than ‘hard’ scores they are relative scores, locating cultures along a continuum (relative to one another on a dimension);
3. even huge studies such as those of the Hofstede (2005) which covered 100000 respondents across x countries have validity questions – their subjects were all IBM employees and would have had a profile that made them employable by IBM rather than necessarily average person in the street characteristics.
4. Do people behave in interaction with other cultures as they would within their own cultures? Would someone
from a hierarchical culture who shows deference to a status figure necessarily show deference to a senior figure from another culture? Is the conative tendency only within culture or does it express across cultures?

Scores for cultures across nations are ones of central tendency and as such they are prototypes – they do not reflect the range of scores around the mean or median. When used without discernment as definitive guides they become stereotypes. Sitting down to negotiate with an Arab business leader armed with a template of the ‘typical Arab way’ based on a national survey of average citizens may be a problem – you may be sitting down to negotiate with an Arab woman who grew up in the USA, completed an MBA, heads a large corporation and is experienced in international negotiation practices.

South Africa is a nation with 11 official languages reflecting distinct racial and tribal groups. Is there a South African style of negotiation? What would a measure of central tendency mean in such a reality? One might distinguish between blacks and whites or within the black population between Xhosas and Zulus and Sothos, or within the white population between Afrikaners and English speakers. But this may also lack validity – in a transforming society why don’t we use other criteria such as values, or religion, or urban-rural divides? Burgess in a work on consumer behaviour for instance identified sixteen ‘buying tribes’.

CONFLICTS OVER CORE VALUES ... OR SIMPLY COMMUNICATIONS GAPS?

Tensions arise between identity groups for many reasons but a distinction can be made between (1) situations in which parties simply misunderstand one another’s ways of communicating and negotiating, and (2) those in which some fundamental aspect of a culture itself is in question.

It is not a problem of miscommunication or misunderstanding that informs divides over issues such as female circumcision; abortion; views on crime and systems of punishment such as the stoning of women accused of adultery; depictions of God; whether gays should be allowed to marry; female or gay priests; animal sacrifices; appropriate dress; women’s rights; systems of justice. The saying is ‘no peace without justice’ – the problem is that conflicts are often generated by competing perceptions of what justice is. These are core values issues. They reflect deep cultural divides over values themselves, not just gaps in communicating about them.

Not all conflicts become deadly of course. As Zartman (2015) points out conflicts within and between nations have for the most part been quite effectively handled over the last half-century. Conflicts within nations tend for the most part to be effectively regulated through institutional means, parliaments, courts, and specialist dispute resolving commissions. Careful political design can enable space to minimize avoidable conflicts, regulate unavoidable conflicts and defuse tensions between identity groups. Depending on the extent to which parties want to integrate or work together political systems may take different forms (Berry 1980). Where everyone wants a shared identity systems of assimilation or integration (fruit blend) may be workable; where groups want to retain their own identity but are willing to work with and provide space for other groups retaining theirs, the design may be one of accommodation (fruit salad); where they cannot agree to function in the same system but are desirous of peaceful relations an agreed separation or partition may be worked out. Of course parties may then engage in conflicts not simply over their core differences but also over the design of the political system itself such as constitutional arrangements, voting systems, powers of the courts, rights protections, boundaries and so on. Conflicts between nations can be eased and resolved through effective diplomacy, references to international tribunals and courts, and international mediation and problem-solving. Things become dangerous when identity groups perceive others as an existential threat, or as thwarting ambitions for protections, land or wealth or other resources.

“In a global economy it is not just diplomats who engage across cultures”

In a global economy driven by transnational corporations and international tourism it is not just diplomats who engage across cultures. Much of the writing on cultural differences emanates from business schools or international travellers – and here the focus is on more effective communication and commercial transactions. Business writers argue that clumsy mismanagement of differences can sour potentially cooperative relations and see business deals lost. Cultural differences can inform communication gaps and misunderstandings and these may have negative implications for negotiations. Guides to preventing common communication pitfalls can be often be found in easily accessible form in small books or websites, but more in-depth works offer greater
insights into the origins of norms and appropriate behaviour. In relation to the Middle East for instance Ali Alsaloom (2010) in his guide to foreign business people in the United Arab Emirates suggests they hang the portraits of national leaders in their offices and indicates the correct order of presentation (17); provides a short introduction to Islam as a faith and how it might be given respect (19); explains regional dress codes (21); how to greet women (25); customary views on cohabitation (26); attitudes to animals (28); and practices such as tipping (72). Jabnoun (2008) provides a detailed application of Islamic principles to management. Al-Marzouki, (2005) offers a perspective on human rights in Human Rights in Islamic Law, as does Hathout (2006) In Pursuit of Justice: The Jurisprudence of Human Rights in Islam. In more rigorously prescriptive mode Muhammad bin ‘Ali Al-Arfaj (2003) explains the rules of Islam and their origin in What Must be Known About Islam.

COMMUNICATING, PERSUADING, LEADING ... AND NEGOTIATING ACROSS CULTURES

Communication is in the first instance about how people convey information and opinions and transfer facts to one another. Differences exist across cultures in how people communicate, with some (such as the USA, Australia, and Netherlands) reflecting direct or low-context styles while others are indirect or high-context in nature (such as China, Japan, Korea and Kenyal. Largely those in the former group are from egalitarian individualistic cultures, the latter from hierarchical and collective ones – a dimension to be addressed a little later. Those from direct communication cultures tend to ask direct questions, get straight to the point, expect reciprocity of information exchange, are open in their rejection of proposals and expect negotiations to be quick and efficient. Those from indirect communication cultures make proposals indirectly, work off implicit messages, seldom open or directly reject proposals and prefer slower deal-making processes. Where direct communication styles are precise and blunt, indirect speech is layered with meaning often implicit rather than directly stated. Tensions can arise across cultures when those from low context cultures miss the nuances of messages indicated by high context ones, finding their communications unclear and confusing – and vice versa with the latter finding the former pushy and too forceful.

Communication styles matter – and in some instances more is at stake than some tensions over style and a little misunderstanding between individuals and groups. In a chapter entitled ‘An Ethnic Theory of Plane Crashes’ in his book Outliers (2008) Malcolm Gladwell reviews the analysis conducted by Korean Air following a series of airliner disasters. The planes were new, technically sound, and the pilot and crew were experienced and well trained. Black box analysis however exposed a communication gap – in the last seconds a co-pilot was heard trying to warn a captain of an impending disaster through mitigated rather than direct speech. Culturally appropriate as it might have been in a hierarchical culture to comment to the captain ‘isn’t it wonderful the technology we have today to fly in bad weather’ (indirect feedback) it would have been more appropriate to demand that ‘he swing sharply to port and climb NOW!’ (direct command to a superior). Some years back I was part of a group asked to present a stimulating interactive day on advances in human resource management to a group of Taiwanese MBA graduates from an American university who were bringing their CEOs to celebrate a decade of graduations in the program. The morning session was a disaster from an interactive perspective – the young people in the front clearly wanted to engage; the old men at the back were expressionless in their non-participation. In a break someone explained to us ‘the young people are very excited and want to engage but custom prohibits them talking before a senior person – the senior guys haven’t a clue how to engage with this material and they are not going to embarrass themselves with any questions – so ... we have an engagement obstacle!’

As these examples illustrate, we do not communicate simply to transfer information or ideas – we communicate to persuade others to do something we want, to change their behaviour or beliefs. A sales agent tries to get someone to buy a house or a car or some other commodity; a manager tries to get his team to work harder to achieve business objectives; a politician tries to convince voters that his approach is better for them than a competitor; a teacher tries to get children to do homework; a company negotiator tries to persuade a union counterpart to accept a wage freeze for a year; diplomats try to persuade one another to change policies on trade or border controls or nuclear power or treatment of their citizens to avoid a more violent confrontation between their nations. In short much of human activity is about persuasion, an activity much researched by social psychologists, analysts of consumer behaviour, as well as investigators of culture and leadership.

People across cultures respond differently to how things are communicated – for instance while some may be persuaded to change their behaviour on the basis of blunt public feedback, others may feel
humiliated or insulted by it and be resistant to change (China, Japan, Korea). Those used to such feedback (from the Netherlands, Russia, Israel) may not feel a ‘quiet word’ (UK) or one couched first in positive points (USA) is a serious message and fail to change as expected (Meyer 2014).

Tactics for persuasion achieve their ends through leveraging the needs, wants and conative tendencies of people, which Cialdini (2007) suggests are common across cultures. These include a proclivity to reciprocation (give and take); to obedience (compliance with authority); to desires for social proof (what others are thinking and doing in situations of ambiguity); and liking (the desire to be like or liked by others). At the core of these techniques lies the theory of cognitive dissonance. People across cultures desire internal coherence – they feel discomforted when disconnects occur in the way they see and feel things, and act. Persuasion is about creating and leveraging dissonance.

Cognitively based persuasive tactics are directed at showing up flaws in the logic of others’ arguments and the negative consequences of doing what they propose. Discomfort is created through revealing a disjuncture in the thinking or logic of the other. A tactic used by sales personnel and by lawyers in court rooms is to get a person to agree to a series of carefully contrived build-up principles in – a series of ‘yes’ responses – before putting a final proposal to which it is hard to say ‘no’. Following all the ‘yes’ responses, to say ‘no’ would be to appear to contradict oneself (and create dissonance). Even cognitive tactics differ across cultures. Meyer (2014) proposes a difference between cultures that seek to persuade first through principles (Germany, Russia) or through applications (USA, Australia). In the former people are best persuaded when a theory or concept is developed leading up to a

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<td>Good communication is precise, simple, clear, expressed and understood at face value. Repetition appreciated if it helps clarify a communication.</td>
<td>Negative feedback frank, blunt and honest and not softened by positive messages. Use of absolute descriptors (‘totally inappropriate’). Criticism may be given to an individual in front of a group.</td>
<td>Negative feedback soft, subtle, diplomatic; negatives wrapped in positives, and use of qualifying descriptors (‘a little inappropriate’). Criticism only in private.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Good communication is sophisticated, nuanced, layered – spoken and understood between the lines with messages implied rather than directly expressed</td>
<td>Negative feedback frank, blunt and honest and not softened by positive messages. Use of absolute descriptors (‘totally inappropriate’). Criticism may be given to an individual in front of a group.</td>
<td>Negative feedback soft, subtle, diplomatic; negatives wrapped in positives, and use of qualifying descriptors (‘a little inappropriate’). Criticism only in private.</td>
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<td>Figure 1: communication-feedback mixes (based on Meyer, 2014: fig 2.3, p. 72)</td>
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The reciprocity lever is used in various forms but essentially involves giving something in order to achieve leverage for something else. In a permutation of this trade unions sometimes use hardball strategies in which they make an extreme demand, wait to the point at which a breakdown in discussions is about to occur and then collapse the demand to one just beyond the assessed fall-back position of the employer. This creates a dilemma of costing for the employer (costs of meeting the demand and settling a matter against the costs of a possible strike), but also leverages the need to reciprocate – ‘if they have moved so far, we should offer something meaningful in response’. The extreme demand, rigid positioning tactic is used to allow for the big drop at a key moment for persuasive purposes. In sales, pressure to reciprocate through a purchase increases on the prospective buyer when a salesman appears to go to great lengths to get a customer a special deal and help with administration and paper work. The dependency created through one nation offering another aid in a time of trouble serves to help when the lender needs a vote of support in an international forum later. And its not just about dropping demands or offering the extra, asking for favours can also be persuasive as Benjamin Franklin discovered. He asked an old enemy if he could borrow a rare book that he knew was in his library. After the loan he noticed a softening of attitude towards himself. A dissonance had been created and was being resolved – ‘how could I lend a book to this person I loathe? He can’t be so bad if I would do such a thing’.

Milgram (2009) put people through a distressing scenario in which they were faced with a dilemma of causing deepening pain to others [breaking a social norm] or defying an authority figure instructing them to do so. Most complied with the instructor they explained later on the basis of his authority and the apparent legitimacy of his instructions. Perpetrators of genocidal acts rationalize their actions be saying they were just following orders, or that circumstances made their acts necessary at the time, or denigrating victims and arguing ‘they deserved it’ in an effort to make coherent or justify their actions (Zartman, Anstey and Meerts 2012). While the tendency to obedience to authority figures is common across cultures – in some it is exerted through the apparent expertise of someone giving a command or making a proposal (toothpaste ads use dentists to promote their products; Milgram conducted his experiments as a professor in a white coat in a reputable university); in others it is exerted through status in a hierarchical social structure (‘we think it’s wrong but not as wrong as failing to obey our superior / the chief’). Thus in the face of a recent constitutional court judgment that the President had violated the constitution, the ANC majority in the National Assembly [itself found to be wanting in the judgment] chose not to impeach him.

People don’t only conform to requirements of authority figures, they also conform to expectations of groups of which they are members [referent] or of which they hope to be members [aspirant reference groups]. Marketing people leverage this desire into sales through advertisements – adverts for brand clothing, electronic devices, cars, watches and so on are populated by pop stars, sports heroes, or people who are clearly ‘cool’. Individuals look to reference groups for guidance or social proof in situations of ambiguity or inadequate information. When unsure they wait for indicators

Members of a doomsday cult deepened rather than lost their faith when an ‘end of days’ deadline passed, explaining to themselves that it is their prayers that have saved the world (...)
from other group members, and as Asch (1955) showed in a simple set of experiments, often vote with a group against what their own senses are clearly telling them is a wrong choice. Workers go on strike as part of a collective to back a demand when clearly it is going to cost rather than gain them economic returns and then justify the action as important for mobilization and group solidarity purposes. Collective cultures place more open emphasis on group decision-making and a communal identity (the philosophy of ‘ubuntu’ in which identity is expressed as ‘I am through my group’) than individualistic ones, but individuals in rich western still aspire to identify with others in a consumer sense at least. And any observer of political rallies in so-called individualistic western nations will see a huge degree of group sentiment and conformity in play.

PERSUASION BY INDIVIDUALS IN ORGANIZATIONS

At an organizational level Peters and Bacon (1998) propose that persuasion (or social instrumentality) is based on Tactics, Organizational power, Personal power and Skills (the TOPS model). To influence another person effectively a persuader must use the right influence technique for that person at that time, have sufficient sources of power for the influence technique being used, and be sufficiently skilled at using the technique to make it work well. People try to persuade one another through logical argument, use of position to legitimize proposals, credible exchange proposals and assertiveness (rational tactics); by appeals to a relationship, alliance building or consultation (social tactics), or appeals to values and behaviour modelling (emotional leverage). They draw power from their roles and placement in an organization, access to and control over resources such as money and equipment and information, and reputation within a social network (organizational power); and individual knowledge and expertise, expressiveness, character, attractiveness and history of relations with another (personal power). As indicated above these are likely to be differentially effective according to cultural contexts.

High impact persuasion skills include assertiveness through use of a compelling tone of voice and non-verbal signals, use of authority without appearing heavy-handed, acting with authority; communication and reasoning through probing and finding creative alternatives; interpersonal skills in having insight into what others value, building rapport and trust, supporting and encouraging others; and interactive skills in convincing people to help influence others, resolving conflicts between others, building consensus, negotiating, and taking the initiative to show others how to do things.

The model is useful in recognizing how individual behaviour influences interpersonal exchanges and that influence is a layered process, expressed through tactical choices, drawing on personal and organizational power sources and demanding some skill in putting these effectively into practice. It also has shortcomings. It is not clear whether the model addressed cross-cultural practices or was developed only within western organizations. In some cultures individual expertise for instance may matter less than status in a system as a source of influence, and social-emotional tactics may have greater bearing than logical argument (see below). It also is silent on the use of coercive tactics common in organizations in which hierarchies of authority are brought to bear through threats and bullying to achieve behavioural compliance. Ignoring it does not make it go away! Coercive power triggers tendencies to obedience when it is exercised by an credible authority figure; desires for group membership and acceptance can be manipulated to facilitate behavioural conformity, especially in situations of ambiguity.

Along another dimension it is important to understand authority relations across cultures. Inegalitarian or low-power distance cultures authority figures are expected to act as facilitators amongst equals with communications often skipping strict hierarchical lines in flat organization structures. Negotiators are appointed according to their expertise in a field and empowered to negotiate deals within relatively open mandates. They tend to make positions clear, offer and expect information about interests and make direct proposals for resolution of differences. They expect a back and forth exchange of positions, interests, options, conditions and concessions to achieve a deal. ‘Face’ matters less than getting the deal done. Internal disagreements may be presented around a negotiating table. In hierarchical cultures on the other hand authority figures are expected to take decisions, and lead from the front. Authority resides in status and position rather than expertise and expresses through clearly tiered structures through which communications flow in an ordered top-down line. Negotiators may be appointed less for reason of expertise than status or rank in a culture. They do not send junior members of a group to negotiate and are insulted if the other does so regardless of expertise. The process is slowed through extensive internal consultation and mandating processes. The emphasis is on face-saving rather than hard
content. Internal disagreements are not aired in front of the other and status determines who speaks and when in a process. Any disagreements are offered in mitigated language.

The research of social psychologists tells us a great deal about social influence, and how people are persuaded to act or believe in certain ways.

LEADERSHIP AS PERSUASION

Leadership too is essentially a process of persuasion – it is about influencing people in a team to achieve a group goal, persuading them somehow to lift performance in a way that sees them achieve a business goal, or prevail over competition in a sports tournament, or in more deadly exchanges over an opponent in a war. Few subjects have received more intense research attention than leadership.

It is a process that has been considered from the perspective of ‘great people’ characteristics, desirable traits (dimensions of age, physique, intelligence, personality, social skills, expertise) follower-fit considerations (individual-group relations), situational or contingency approaches (how individual competencies interact with task and circumstance demands), charismatic – instrumental (visionary mobilizing vs implementation) comparisons, and different styles (autocratic, democratic, laissez faire approaches, or task vs relationship leanings). In his famous advisory in The Prince (1532) Machiavelli considered the use of fear and love, hate, mercy, compassion and image building for purposes of achieving and sustaining power. While it is desirable for a leader to be loved and feared he argued, if it comes to a choice it is better to be feared because people are fickle in their affiliations and ‘love at their convenience’, while fear is a constant – and people ‘fear at the convenience of the prince’. Wherever possible though a leader should avoid being hated – hate is the consequence of taking things from people. In this regard a leader does not have to generous in giving, but should avoid taking things of value from others. A leader should be seen to have a capacity for cruelty in order to be seen as kind. Where a leader is universally generous and kind it is not recognized or respected. When a few of those who oppose or break rules are dealt with harshly it reveals a leader who has capacity to punish and is willing to do so. This has deterrent value, and people come to see the leader as kind because punishment is not widely used and is not directed towards them. Then he offers a ‘do what it takes’ missive suggesting that while a leader should always present an image of integrity, faith, and compassion he should be willing to act contrarily to ensure retention of control over others. Achieving and sustaining control over others in short may require a capacity for duplicity!

This politically incorrect approach to leadership is not lauded in modern texts, but it is not without foundation in reality.

In essence Ulrich et al (1999) see leadership as primarily a goal-driven activity, assessed often by results achieved. It is an interactive concept – leaders are usually defined by a ‘followership’ and deliver results within particular situations – conditions not always replicable. At base leaders achieve results through enabling teams or organized groups to achieve defined goals. Effective leaders analyze environments, motivate individuals, build organizations, create efficiencies, and deliver to stakeholders – and are marked by their integrity (rather than a capacity for duplicity!). It helps to see leadership as a process of persuasion. Leaders are defined by how effectively they persuade others to do things that will enable goal achievement. Effective leaders recognize situations,
understand and interact effectively with followers, and have a repertoire of skills to draw on either personally or within their teams.

Goleman (2000) for instance, identifies six different styles of leadership, each appropriate to different circumstances and with different impact on group climate. These reflect different kinds of persuasive styles amongst leaders but it is important to recognize that these might have differential resonance with diverse target groups, and in different situations. Authoritarian leaders use coercion and threats to get what they want done, and may be best to get the job done in crisis situations and where there are cultural tendencies to compliance but in more egalitarian, consensus driven cultures they induce a negative climates and may evoke resistance. Authoritative leaders on the other hand demonstrate expertise and a willingness to use this for the common good, inspiring confidence and trust amongst those to be persuaded to a particular course of action. In TOPS terms they use their authority assertively without being heavy handed. Pacesetters are conscientious and try to motivate simply by being out front working harder and faster than anyone else and demanding that other keep up. In TOPS terms they model behaviour - but the persuasive approach may fail if others cannot keep up or meet expected standards. Pacesetters may lack the empathic connect with those they are trying to lead to get something done or a change executed. Democratic style leaders are collaborative, promote participation, working together and good communications to get buy-in for a project, or new rules and procedures. They work effectively in egalitarian and consensus-based cultures but may not be as effective in hierarchical ones or where circumstances demand a quick result. Affiliative leadership styles reflect an approach of ‘people come first’ with a strong emphasis on relationship building and social cohesion. They hold groups together and may be useful for purposes of healing within or between groups after traumatic periods. They leverage peoples’ desire to belong to and participate in a group to get things done. But they may not get tasks accomplished as efficiently as authoritarians, authoritative styles or pacesetters. Coaching style leaders motivate others to get things done through a development approach, leveraging their needs for personal growth, support and recognition.

Leadership then is founded in the skill of persuading people to work together to achieve a goal – it is a negotiation. Approaches to leadership are differentially useful across cultures and circumstances ... different negotiation tactics are required in each for optimal outcomes.

CONCLUSIONS

Negotiation is essentially about persuasion – about parties trying to get others to change their positions, behaviours or beliefs in order to overcome a difference between them. Effective persuasion strategies start with the positions [demands or current beliefs or behaviours] of ‘the other’ and then an understanding of the needs, wants, fears and
Change strategies are essentially about getting the attention of the other; prompting a discomforting emotional arousal; and then showing how that tension can be relieved through doing something differently – changing a bargaining position, making a concession, buying a product, voting for a particular political candidate, achieving a production or a sales target, making a contribution to a welfare organization. Understanding differences in how people think, feel and act; in what matters to them; in how they perceive the world to work or want it to work is what enables effective persuasion by leaders, negotiators, sales personnel, therapists. It starts with the ‘other’ and is achieved through flexibility of approach. Generally ‘pull’ strategies work better than ‘push’ strategies – change is better effected when people want to change. Coercion often elicits resistance. Getting people to want to do something requires understanding of what matters to them as individuals with their own characters, and as members of particular cultures with specific behavioural norms, ways of communicating and modes of exercising authority.

Stereotyping should be avoided but an understanding of broad cultural differences enables critical choices for negotiators. In thinking through a persuasive strategy negotiators should ask themselves whether desired changes in behaviour by the other will be better effected through:

- rational, social or emotional levers;
- if rational argument – is the other operating out of the same or a different frame of reference; will contrary facts open or close people to change; should the approach be principles or applications based?
- coercive tactics or rewards and incentives;
- direct or indirect communications;
- leveraging reciprocity - and how concessions might be contrived and conditioned;
- a consensus-based or top-down exercise of authority – consultation or directives?
- a strictly task-based business contractual approach, or one based on social relations?
- through experts or peer influence - and how this might be managed;
- a specific order of participation and speaking;
- the participation of senior leaders or just technical experts;
- dealing on an issue by issue basis (close out issues one by one) or building a loose package of a deal (nothing is agreed until everything is agreed).

References

- Peters, R and Arnold, M. 1998 Survey of Influence Effectiveness: A Research Report. International LearningWorks, Inc. All rights reserved. Corporate Headquarters 1130 Main Avenue Durango, CO 81301 (800) 344-0451 FAX (970) 259-7194
- The core reference for those interested in cultural studies is that of Geert and Gert Hofstede (McGraw Hill 2005) Cultures and Organization: Software of the Mind – this research started in the 1980s informs many other works in the field. Its influence is strongly evident in the GLOBE studies covering