

Study Finds Narrowed Cultural Gap With Mexico

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(PhysOrg.com) -- The cultural divide that has existed between the U.S. and Mexico is slowly diminishing, research by a UT Dallas professor finds.

The study, co-authored by School of Management faculty member Dr. Habte Woldu, reveals that the cultural differences between the two nations as a whole have remained unchanged. However, when controlling for age, gender, education and occupation, the research indicates that younger, more educated, professional Mexicans demonstrate more cultural assimilation with the U.S. cultural value system.

These findings could have important implications for international managers designing human resource and cross-cultural management strategies, Woldu said. The study could also enhance communication and understanding of the two cultures, he said.

Woldu's study, "Is the Mexican Culture Becoming Similar to that of United States in Post-NAFTA Era? Viewing Both Cultures through Four Cultural Dimensions," won a best paper award at a recent International Academy of Business and Public Administration Disciplines conference held in Dallas.

Unlike most cultural research works, which deal mainly with static cross-cultural differences, this paper explores changes within a country. Researchers measured [cultural values](#) based on key cultural dimensions.

To acquire the data, Woldu and co-author Agnieszka Skuza, a professor at the Poznan University of Economics in Poland, surveyed more than 1,100 people from the U.S., Argentina and Mexico. They conducted the surveys in the early '90s - before the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between the U.S., Mexico and Canada was established - and again in 2008.

Researchers found that young, educated, career-focused individuals from both sides of the border have grown more similar culturally.

“When we looked at it even closer, we compared not only a manager, but a manager who was young living in Mexico with a young manager in the U.S., and we saw no significant differences between the two of them,” Woldu said.

A professor of international management studies in the School of Management, Woldu specializes in the dynamics of cultural change in emerging economies. He has conducted similar research in Africa, India and Eastern Europe.

“The story to tell from this work is that nations keep their own cultural identity at large, but a specific group of people are changing as the global economy influences other nations through education and technology, and that population will continue to grow,” Woldu said.

Woldu believes this study was needed because of [Mexico](#)'s emerging status as an international player and its proximity to the United States. International relations between the U.S. and its southern neighbor will be more important in the next 10 to 15 years when the U.S. is likely to rely more heavily on Latin American employees as the flow of manpower from China and India loses pace, he said.

“Those nations in the next 15 years will be economic leaders and be preoccupied with their own economic expansion, so will need more

manpower to sustain their economic growth,” Woldu said. “China is a 2 plus 1 - two parents and one child - demographic model, and with an aging population and few working-age Chinese, that model plus the anticipated economic growth will demand that China and India retain their working populations.”

Provided by UT Dallas

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