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Organizational Behaviors and Cultural Context: The Brazilian "*Jeitinho*"

1. Introduction

To what extent is it possible to perceive specifically Brazilian organizational behaviors? What are they? Where do they originate?

This paper is within the scope of our previous works, which focused on cultural features, and tries to articulate the human "reality" of organizations which takes root in a sociohistorical analysis that supports the observed and collected data. Concerning the Brazilian case, the data refer to the analysis of both training and development actions in a great number of organizations, as well as to the study of the organizations' images in the minds of managers and the attitudes demonstrated in negotiation processes.

The analysis of such data makes it possible to confirm the "personalist" and "social" dimension of the Latin organizations. Meanwhile, it brings to light typical Brazilian idiosyncracies. Thus, the importance and the original nature of the mediation systems among people are stressed, as well as those between the individual and the organization and between the person and the law.

These specific features are linked to the sociohistorical and anthropological interpretations of Brazil. The "*jeitinho*" category stands out as a hermeneutic key of the Brazilian culture, and is explored in its linkage with the gathered organizational data.

A great Brazilian intellectual, a half-blooded (African-Polish) man, who died recently, Paulo Leminsky, wrote a novel in the Joycean mode of expression, or in the Guimaraes Rosa mode of expression, that is a very significant piece of work on approaching the problems of cultural adaptation. Leminsky (1989) imagines that René Descartes came along on the Maurício de Nassau expedition, at the time of the Dutch occupation in part of the Brazilian Northeastern sites. By metaphorically

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placing Cartesius in the Brazilian tropical environment—a nonrecorded but very plausible fact, for the philosopher wandered, at that time, around the Netherlands—the novelist shows how the "white" European logic collapses under the equatorial latitudes, melting in the heat and before a world that seems hideous and unclassifiable. "How come," asks Leminsky's Descartes, perplexed, "not even nothing is what it seems back there!" "It's a 'pro-return' that goes neither backward nor forward," the philosopher-physicist-mathematician-theologian concludes, in a neologism, a verbal attempt to root itself in reality. In order to live and to survive among so much fauna and flora blending with tropical exuberance, among a procession of Africans and Indians, his rationalism had to be broken up by strokes of nonsense, imagination, fantasy, and surrealism to be able to build up another logic that would be operational down here.

Such allegories are not born by chance. They are symptomatic and paradigmatic, and reflect an underlying reality. The problems of relationships among different cultures are synthesized here. Race, environment, customs, history, and the world viewpoint, in short, determine the personality of the human groups that facilitate or obstruct exchange.

Thus, the Brazilian way of being keeps a close relationship with its history as a colonial dependent and peripheral Third World country with its ethnic formation and geography. So it is a premise that Brazilian development in "adequate" patterns will only happen if Brazilian people are able positively to recognize their "cultural" personality.

One can scarcely find empirical works on the specific matter that might reveal, at the essence of the behaviors, what Celso Furtado calls "the Brazilian cultural being" that has arisen out of the dependent modernization of the country.

Hence, our purpose is to follow a wake that, starting with the analysis of empirical data received from companies—particulary in the negotiation processes, managerial development interventions, and comparative studies with other cultures—should lead to a connection with the historical development and the Brazilians' sociopolitical formation, and help us understand current behaviors in Brazilian organizations better.

2. Organizational behaviors in the Brazilian company

In 1989, A.M. Hostalacio Costa, S.T. Diegues Fonseca, and M.L. Goulart Dourado, members of one of the most important consulting and action-research institutions in Brazil, the Fundaçao Dom Cabral, conceived a report based upon interventions dealing with management and the human relations training of managers in Brazilian companies. The work is based on data gathered from several questionnaires, from observations of role-playing exercises and case discussions in seminars, and also on studies based on interviews with managers from different hierarchical levels. The authors, specialists in the field of organization development, used the North American principles of Hersey and Blanchard, such as

"situational leadership," as well as Likert's principle of participative management, Maslow and Herzberg's motivational theories, and Latin and European approaches such as "Institutional Analysis," which was mainly developed in France and Italy, as theoretical and methodological references.

In 1989, in a seminar on leadership, these authors presented their conclusions to a group of thirty executives of several client institutions with which they had worked previously. The conclusions about the way Brazilian organizations are managed were thus articulated as follows:

- Brazilian managerial performance is characterized by an immediatist view, directed toward short-term results with an emphasis on crisis solutions.
- There is a lack of strategic planning and/or a gap in planning between the tactical and the operational management levels.
- Decisions are centralized at superior hierarchical levels, with clear incompatibility between responsibility and authority.
- Organizational structure is excessively hierarchical, and the inner subsystems are excessively segmented, without integration.
- The system of control is partly marked as punitive, composed of follow-up mechanisms that are random and dissociated from a feedback process.
- Negotiations are carried out predominantly in an atmosphere in which winners lose and losers win and the main conflicts are not openly discussed. Attitudes tend to be imposed upon subordinates, and soothing behaviors are employed before superiors.
- Management has trouble occupying its own functional areas, for an inadequate distribution of authority associated with a punitive system of control leads to fear of assuming risks and consequently to a behavior of "pushing the problem upwards"—that is, delegation to a superior.
- The authoritarian-benevolent system within the limits of interaction with the deliberative-consultative one (as in Likert's model) is predominant, even though the organizational discourse tends to be participative. This is when the gap between managerial discourse and practice becomes clearer. "The discourse has to be made a practice"; "Make practical the discourse in which people are the main resources of the company."

Brazilian organizations are predominantly worried about immediate results, achievement, and short-term performance, which are particularly stressed by managers with an engineering background. Results are consequently restricted to a short- and medium-term strategic framework. Such actions impair the purposes and goals of productivity, cost reduction, and quality, as well as organizational efficiency.

When analyzing the organizational, managerial, and individual strengths and weaknesses, the groups have shown a great ease in determining weaknesses and a great difficulty in finding strengths. Primarily, they limit themselves to the

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Within the Brazilian organizational reality, there is a remarkable valorization of managerial positions, to the detriment of technical positions. Salary increases and promotions are closely bound to the executive positions, thus leading to a depreciation of technical duties. There is, however, a paradox in the promotion process, since managers are selected on the basis of their individual technical competence.

One of us, a Frenchman who took part in this seminar, was surprised by two phenomena: first, the findings were rather shocking because of their negative nature; and second, managers received the survey results, which were presented to them in an open and straightforward manner, with a surprising degree of ease. One might rather have expected them to feel crushed by the "verdict."

What to conclude? Was this survey clear and objective and were the Brazilian managers simply not sensitive and not in a defensive position? Or did they tend to submit themselves to the specialists' conclusions in an almost masochistic manner? We shall return to this question.

The above observations are nonetheless very consistent with the results gathered from several surveys conducted by other specialists with company managers. Thus, Cardoso (1964) noted an excessive direct control inside Brazilian organizations, where family control works as a tool to restrain the delegation of authority to subordinates, and to valorize and stress loyalty and trust as desirable characteristics of subordinates.

Prasad (1981), when researching in Brazilian companies and their foreign subsidiaries, concludes with a low opinion of the capacity of subordinates for leadership and initiative, as shown by Brazilian managers. But, surprisingly enough, while he found they were less democratic than the expatriates on leadership issues, they espoused a more democratic belief in internal-control issues.

Amado and Cathelineau (1987–1988) presented a theoretical model and a methodological approach about the meaning of behavior in the context of negotiations. Wey (1987), following this model and methodology, collected data for four years on Brazilian managers (900 from 75 private and state organizations) and different styles of behavior during negotiations. Her findings are summarized in Tables 1 and 2.

These tables show a very clear predominance of the "receptive" style (linking and seducing—63 percent), rather than the so-called active style (persuading and asserting—38 percent), even if such differences are markedly more stressed in state organizations. Everything seems to happen in such a way that Brazilian managers try somehow to fix things up in order to avoid direct confrontation, which is experienced as dangerous (little capacity to withdraw), thus establishing personal relationships and giving signs of an open mind and empathy.

Marcondes et al. confirmed these results in 1989 with the same methodology in a study involving 3, 069 professionals. Their data are summarized in Table 3.

Regarding the submissive and the paternalistic attitudes that are evidently linked to the already mentioned authoritarian and hierarchical features, unpub-

Table 1.   Negotiation styles (concepts and behaviors). (From Amado and Cathelineau, 1987–88.)

STYLES	CONCEPTS	TYPICAL BEHAVIORS
ACTIVE		
PERSUADING	To have others take one's ideas in.	To propose and suggest. To argue, reason and justify.
ASSERTING	To impose and judge others.	To make requirements and rules known. To let one's point of view and wishes be known. To evaluate others and oneself. To punish, reward and yield.
RECEPTIVE		
LINKING	To understand the others frame of reference	To encourage participation of others. To search the agreement points. To listen and be empathetic.
SEDUCING	To open one self while trying to involve the others	To influence others through one's own behavior. To seduce, motivate others and raise their spirit. To share information. To admit one's own mistakes.
WITHDRAWAL	To keep a distance from immediate issues	To stay apart, to jump out, to escape difficulties

lished data collected in 1989 by Souza and Wey pointed out that the profile is consistent with the others' findings, with an emphasis on the tendencies listed in Table 4.

In Brazil in 1989, Amado and Cathelineau, in a yet unpublished study, used a case-study methodology based on a negotiation situation between two persons elaborated in France by Cathelineau with French managers in 1989. The 128 Brazilian managers have, overall, shown a very similar profile to that presented by the French investigators. If the latter researchers seem to be a bit more "dialectic" than the Brazilian team (the Cartesian reasoning leads them to be more argumentative), the Brazilians appear more open-minded, more cooperative, more receptive, while their assertiveness and capacity to exert pressure remain weak. (See Figure 1.)

As Graham and Herberger (1983) point out, while the crux of the negotiation process for North American managers is persuasion, in Brazil it is neither information nor persuasion: "Brazilians cannot depend on a legal system to iron out

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Table 2. Most characteristic negotiation styles (from Wey, 1987).

THE MOST CHARACTERISTIC STYLES			
STYLES	STATE ORGANIZATION	PRIVATE ORGANIZATION	TOTAL
linking	52 %	46 %	(48 %)
persuading	27 %	33 %	(31 %)
seducing	17 %	15 %	(15 %)
asserting	2 %	5 %	(4 %)
withdrawing	2 %	1 %	(1 %)

Table 3. Negotiation styles (from Marcondes et al., 1989).

Negotiation styles among Brazilian managers - %		Outstanding negotiation styles among Brazilian managers according to their roles - %		
		Director/manager	Superv.	Technicians
Linking	46	49	43	46
Persuading	30	25	35	40
Seducing	18	18	15	10
Asserting	5	6	4	3
Withdrawing	1	2	3	1

Table 4. Negotiation styles (from Souza and Wey, 1989).

STYLES	STATE ORGANIZATION	PRIVATE ORGANIZATION	TOTAL
linking	59 %	44 %	50,5 %
persuading	18 %	26 %	22,0 %
seducing	16 %	22 %	19,0 %
asserting	6 %	8 %	7,0 %
withdrawing	1 %	--	0,5 %

conflicts, so they depend on personal relationships" (p. 163). That is why they are victims of the "wristwatch syndrome"—the fact that looking at your watch helps get things moving along. Say Graham and Herberger, "impatience causes apprehension, thus necessitating even longer periods of non-task sounding" (p. 163).

Parallel to this study on negotiation, we carried out another study in 1989. Based on the work and methodology developed by Laurent in 1983, this study explored Brazilian managers' conceptions of organizations, compared with those of managers from other countries. Several statements on the management and the structuring of organization were then proposed, and degree of agreement found among managers was recorded, as indicated for each proposal in Figures 2–5.

Many of the results place Brazil in an outstanding position when compared to other nations. The Brazilian representatives seem to dream of eliminating conflicts inside organizations. To the first assertion, that "Most organizations would
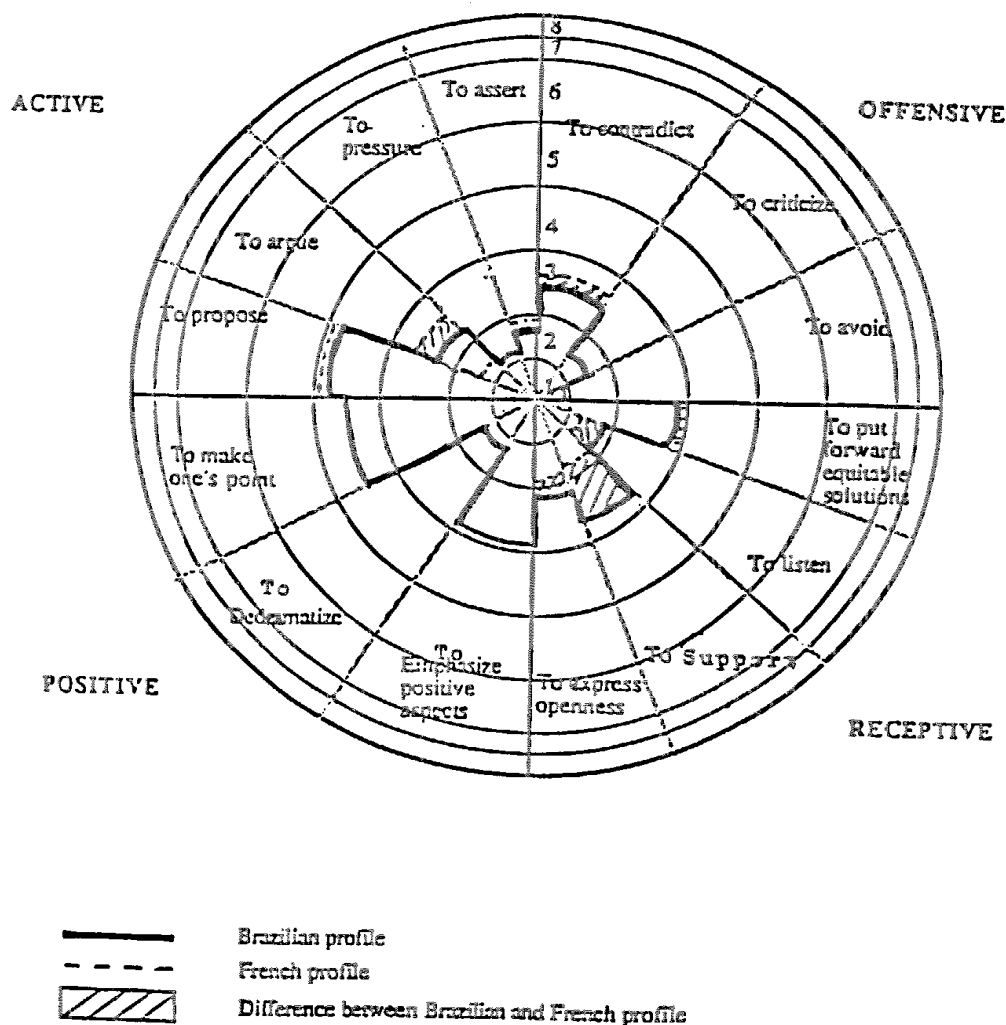
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To assert

To pressure

To contradict

To criticize

To argue

To propose

To avoid

To make one's point

To put forward equitable solutions

To listen

To dramatize

To Support

POSITIVE

To Emphasize positive aspects

To express openness

RECEPTIVE

——— Brazilian profile

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Figure 1. Average profile of Brazilian versus French attitudes in negotiation (from Amado and Cathelineau, 1989). This map is a synthesis of the results of research undertaken with 128 Brazilian managers, and 500 French ones, from a questionnaire presenting 28 situations of interpersonal negotiations with 4 possible solutions each. The results shown here reflect not direct observations but self-reports. When there is only one line on each scale, it means that Brazilian and French managers scored the same.

be better off if conflict could be eliminated forever," managers from various countries tend to answer differently (see Figure 2).

Brazilian managers worry about a precise definition of their roles. Responses to a second assertion, that "Most managers would achieve better results if their roles were less precisely defined," are indicated in Figure 3.

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cal structure is to establish each one's authority. Responses to the third proposal, that "The main reason for having a hierarchical structure is so that everyone knows who has authority over whom," are presented in Figure 4.

Unlike the North Americans, and more than their Latin counterparts, Brazilian managers are convinced that they are paid to *know*, and in front of their own subordinates, they do not tolerate uncertainty. Agreement with the next assertion, that "It is important for a manager to have at hand precise answers to most of the questions that his subordinates may raise about their work," is indicated in Figure 5.

The extrapolation of the specificity of Laurent's results seems to confirm an opposition between the North American understanding and the Latin perspective of the organization. The Brazilians are closer to the French and the Italians on what was called a "social" approach (Inzerilli and Laurent, 1983), or a "personalist" approach of the Latin organization (Amado and Laurent, 1982; Amado, Faucheux, and Laurent, 1990), in contrast to the North American approach of the organization, which is "functionalist" and "pragmatic":

> American managers seem to subscribe to a model which is functional and instrumental: the organization is perceived above all as a system of tasks to be accomplished and objectives to be attained. ... French managers tend to share a personalist and social model of the organization, which is perceived above all as a collectivity of persons to be managed. [Amado, Faucheux, and Laurent, 1990, p. 28]

All data collected in our research show that the Brazilian standpoint about organizations is much closer to the French personalist viewpoint.

The work of Hofstede (1980a) has confirmed such closeness of perspective and suggests the same patterns (see Figures 6 and 7). If the Brazilians are less individualistic than the French and other, richer countries' citizens, they are all marked by the hierarchical power and authority centralization, by attempts to control uncertainty, and by a certain concern for quality of working life and for personal relationships, as well as for a caring attitude toward less favored ones and the working atmosphere (Hofstede calls it "femininity," as opposed to "masculinity," a more "achieving and goal oriented" attitude). Again we find a Latin cluster (the French and the Brazilian outlooks being very close to one another) opposed to an Anglo-Saxon one.

In short, the results of these different research projects are consistent and allow us to define a certain identity of both the Brazilian organization and the behaviors of the employees in it: a Latin pyramid in which a certain dependence (in contrast to France where counterdependence and rebellion prevail) echoes the centralization and control of a hierarchy concerned with asserting itself formally. Brazilian organizations seem to be comprised of members who are faced with the fear of unbearable conflicts, sensitive to the human dimension of work, and who are accustomed to avoiding difficulties thanks to personal interventions, which are the basis of the equilibrium.

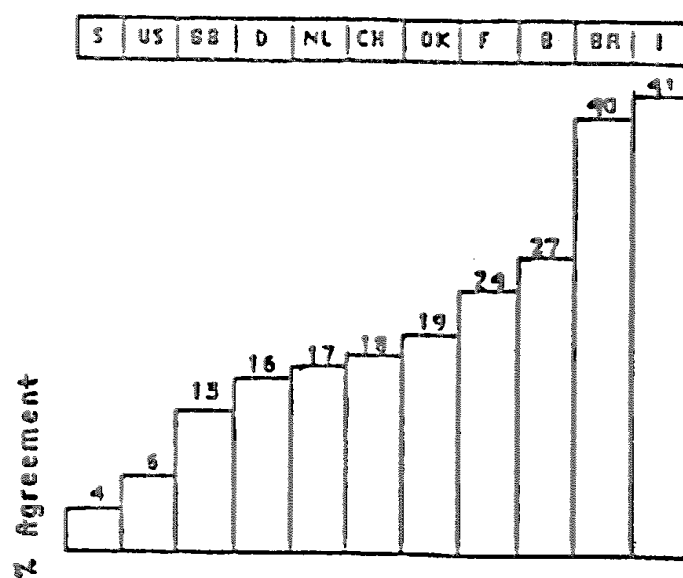This is where the most remarkable difference of the Brazilian man seems to
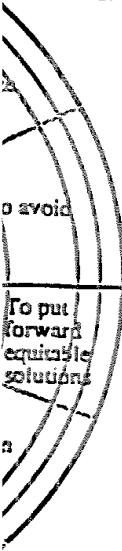
Figure 2.   From Laurent, 1983. Abbreviations: US = United States; S = Sweden; GB = Great Britain; NL = The Netherlands; D = Germany; DK = Denmark; CH = Switzerland; B = Belgium; F = France; I = Italy; BR = Brazil.
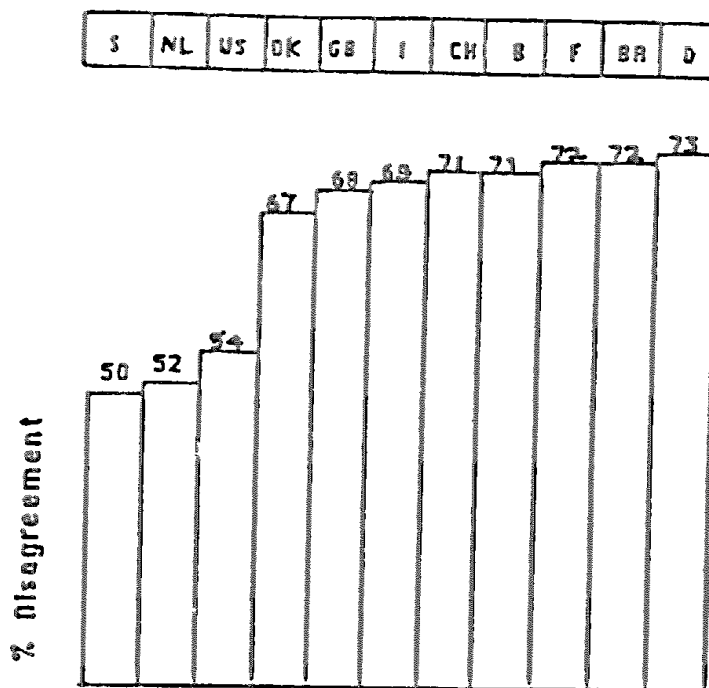
Figure 3.   From Laurent, 1983.

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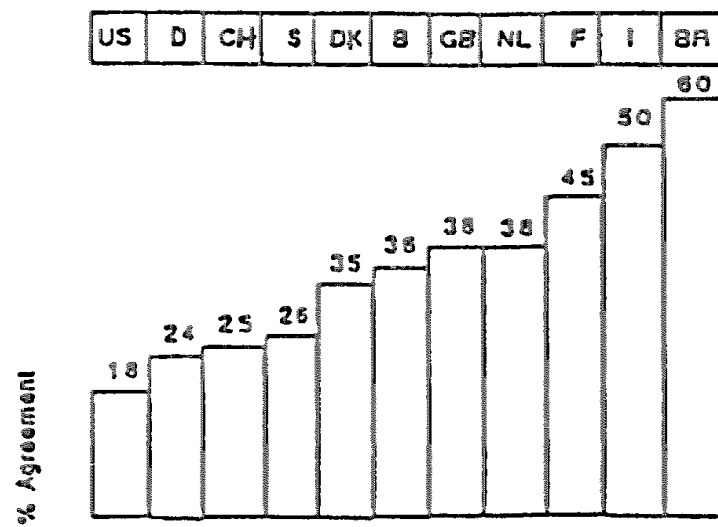
Figure 4. From Laurent, 1983.

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S	NL	US	DK	GB	CH	B	D	F	I	BR

Figure 5. From Laurent, 1983.

lie. His history and his sociocultural roots are the basis for these intermediations, of which the Brazilian "*jeitinho*"—a special way of managing obstacles in order to find a way out of bureaucracy—makes a paradigmatic synthesis.
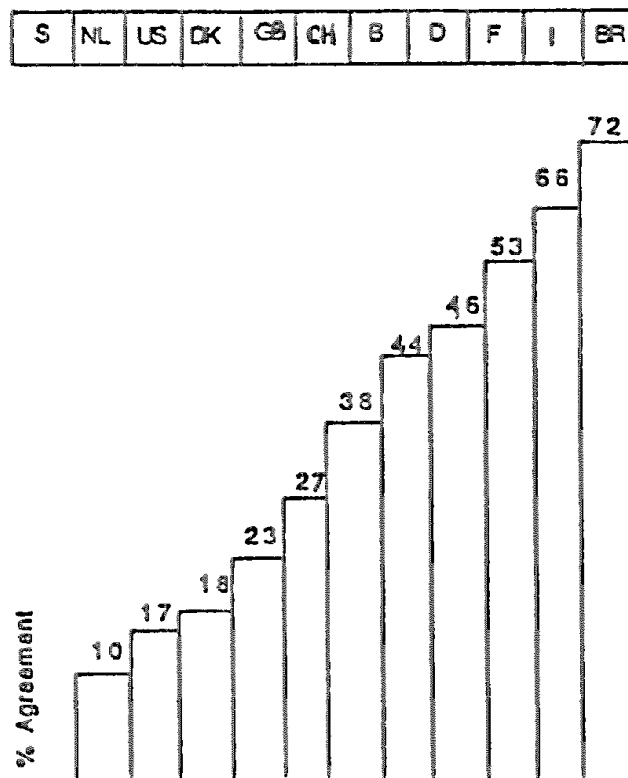
3. Sociohistorical roots of the Brazilian culture: an interpretive synthesis

Theoretical background

This study requires as background Max Weber's epistemological principles, in which science does not validate value judgments, but yet it finds its basis in value premises when choosing references and leads to follow. This means that one must be aware that choices and theoretical orientations will be subject, from the beginning, to the researchers' world viewpoint. This fact pervades decisions and reflects cultural values. But this circularity does not invalidate conclusions if it has taken root in reality. Thus, keeping these principles in mind as a reference point makes it possible to reach reliable results, even if they always seem partial and temporary. Nevertheless, it is a mistake to think that these cultural features that are raised will stand together in a harmonic set, or even to think that they form a totally coherent structural model. The Brazilian culture, in particular, is marked by a high level of contradiction because it is young and its components are, just now, in a process of integration. To understand it more adequately, one has to use the similarity and difference methodology of Kant, which entails grasping concepts and categories dialectically in the darkness and lightness of opposition. But, in that process, it is still possible to achieve, at times, several levels of confluence and synthesis that shall come to reveal characteristic totalities.

We therefore see every attempt to search for uniform cultural patterns as stereotyping, and, at times, caricature. A culture itself is a game of transactions through which flow the worldview of people and societies, and even more restrictive groups with unconscious bearings.

When seeking out the origins of the current behavior of the Brazilian—that is, of his culture within this restricted sense—one should study what he says, writes, represents, and does. In this way, Schein (1984) outlines three "windows" through which one may view a culture: the visible signs of its creations, patterns of behavior, and technologies; consciously incorporated values; and unconscious assumptions. The choice of the window (or windows) to which we will turn our eyes is methodologically very important.

It is our intention to find a way, starting with the Brazilian sociopolitical heritage, that will lead to a definition of the influence of the Brazilian culture in the management of organizations founded or based in Brazil. This endeavor will be only a glance through an opening in Schein's window.

In Brazil, the use of the "Best Practices,"[1] which originated in technologically more advanced cultures and in the context of capitalist economies, has proven

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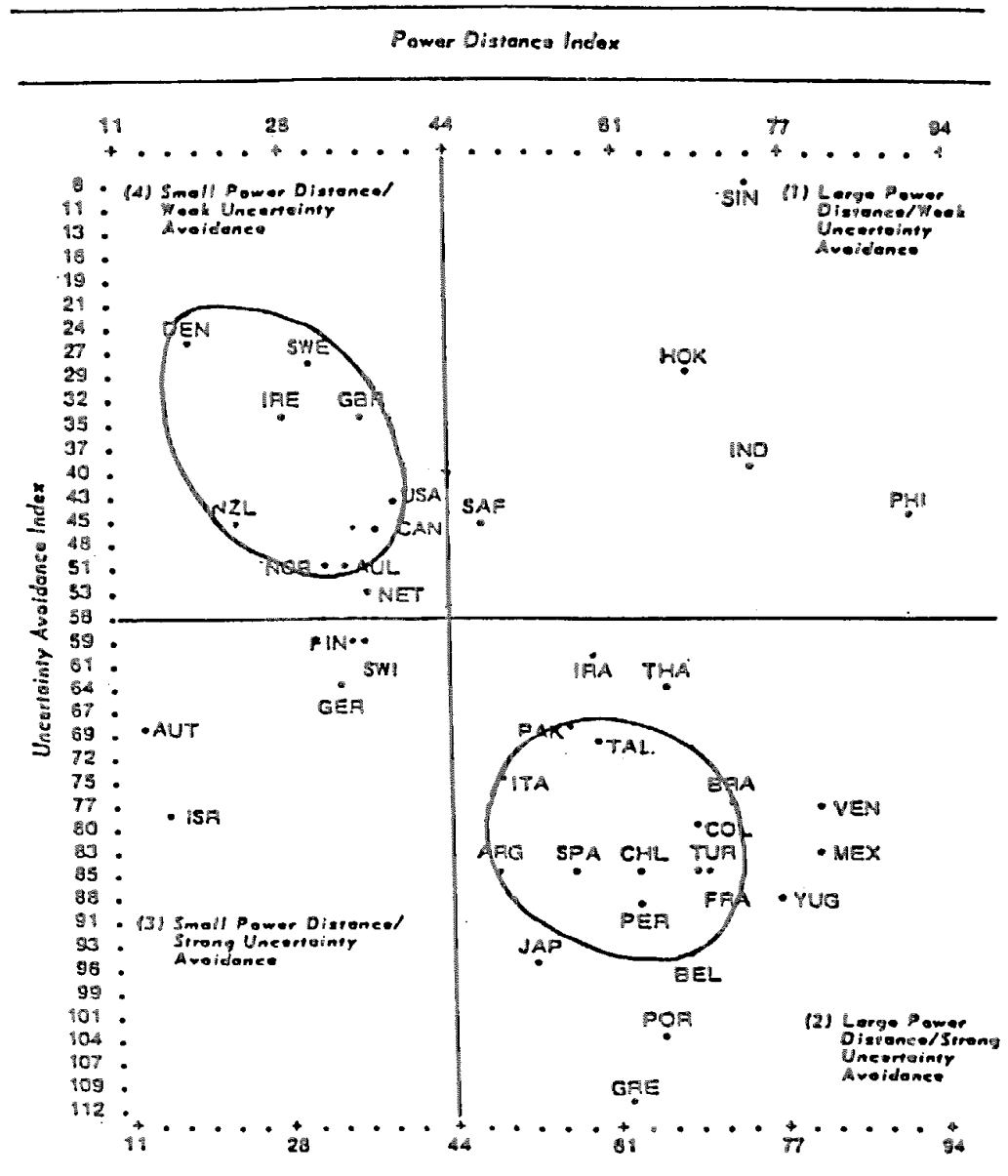
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Figure 6. The position of 40 countries on the power distance and uncertainty scales (from Hofstede, 1980a, p. 51).

that such transpositions are doomed to failure, or take much longer to become functional than is tolerable. And all, it seems, mainly because of cultural diversity. Recent studies carried out by several authors have pointed out that a blind, although well-meaning, use of managerial models might lead to failure and waste of time and money if the local culture is not taken into account. Such
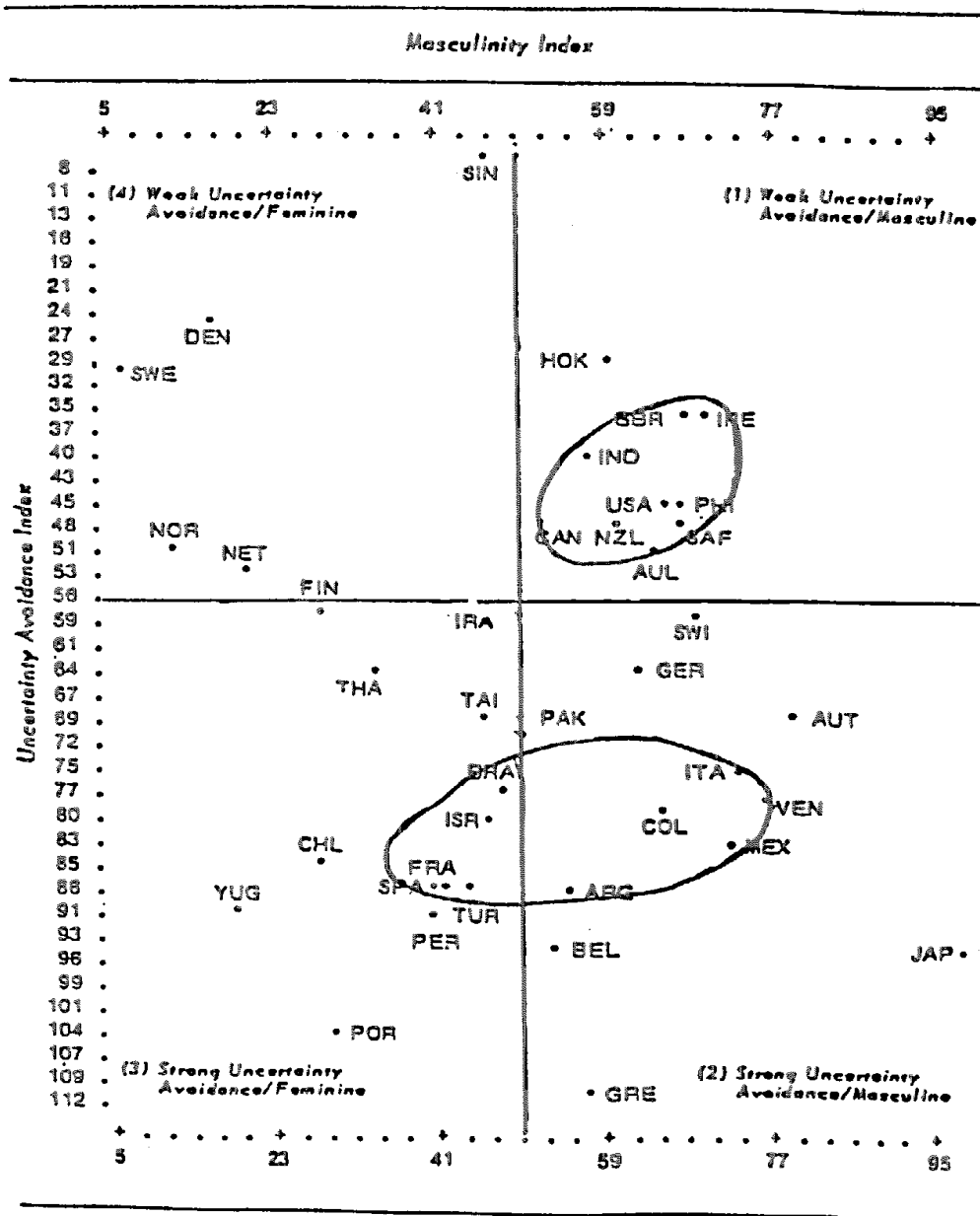
Figure 7. The position of 40 countries on the uncertainty avoidance and masculinity scales (from Hofstede, 1980a, p. 54).

efforts are frustrating and usually lead to misgivings regarding the companies' modernization actions. Thus, in empirical terms, it is difficult to support the belief expressed by the so-called culture-free line of thought that, in large organizations that are very specialized and formalized, cultural differences are leveled, and this fact brings about a convergence of behaviors thanks to the common

ideologies (Hickson et al., 1981). Such leveling is no longer possible, even in multinational companies operating in Third World countries. Therefore, we conclude that research on the influence of Brazilian culture over the management of national and international companies is both relevant and important. As a principle of regulation, every action in a social system (in this case, the company) is always influenced by the wider cultural system. Hofstede (1987), as mentioned before, was able to come to a kind of worldwide typology by exploiting international data reflecting differences among national cultures, defined within four reference parameters. But this mapping neglects the typical characteristics of each country, and is, thus, of little help to clear up those issues concerning the influence of a specific country's culture in the organization. Hofstede's contribution, however, reinforces our belief that cultural aspects cannot be neglected in transfers of technology, in the context of organizations.

Some may go even further. When comparing the strategies of negotiation of American and Japanese multinational enterprises, Hilb (1988) found that the methodologies they use for social research on culture is itself pervaded by the cultural context in study. For instance, while quantitative approaches are more acceptable in the United States, the Japanese prefer a qualitative approach.

The bureaucratic "estamento"—a social state of being: the base of the Brazilian socioeconomical organization (Faoro, 1958)

Brazil emerged, in early days, as a confluence of three human streams: the Portuguese, the African, and the Indian. Brazilians are a blend of races, but the leaders in the process are the Portuguese, who had political control and formed the elite. The racial fusion took place with the Metropolis as the catalytic agent and also as the sociopolitical reference. But the Portuguese people are themselves of mixed blood, with the Moors and even the Africans present in their ethnic background. Geographically, they are Europeans, even though their "souls" are not as white as the souls of their continental neighbors, including Spain, their partner in the Iberian peninsula.

Such plasticity in the Portuguese ethnic background had deep influences in the colonization of Brazil. When the Portuguese came to Brazil, a long-standing and typical sociopolitical order, different from that in other European countries, had already been established in Portugal.

A centralized power, of military nature, replaced the yet incipient feudalism in Portugal. But such military aggregation had always revolved around the king's power, and the king chose his servants following a mercenary process. He rewarded them with goods and the promise of privileges, appealing simultaneously to the courtiers' greed and adventurous spirit. These servants of wealth did not have to pass through the sieve of the feudal barony which, for that reason, was slowly extinguished.

The state, as a personal enterprise of the prince, had a part in every private business, buying loyalty via the royal treasury, always eager for more contributions. The economy was at that time centralized on the state treasury, which collected revenues and

taxes. It was the patriarchal entrepreneur and prince who controlled the kingdom as his own home. Everything was rather different from the rest of Europe, where business was held by private enterprise with a commercial and mercantilist angle.

Nevertheless, it must be stressed that the notion of "state" was fundamental in the *anciens régimes*, and was based upon the old Indo-European distinction between the three states: the church, the army, and the peasants.

Portuguese capitalism flourished like an appendix to the royal house and as a dependent and minor partner. In that structure, traditionalism and centralization predominate and are almost synonymous.

The fundamental element in this machine was the bureaucratic *"estamento,"* recruited by the king in order to accomplish his despotic will and goals, in the realm of a patrimonial state.

"Estamento," according to Faoro (1958), based on Max Weber, means a group characterized by an aspiration to privileges, which finds its accomplishment in differentiation through honor and the acceptance of individuals. It is different from class, which is the result and product of economic interests tied to the market. It is also different from bureaucracy, which is a simple apparatus of the establishment, its administrative staff performing on the borderlines of rational and professional behaviors. But, even so, *estamento* may sometimes appear as either a class or a bureaucracy, in some ways linked to the state. It cannot be seen as a dysfunction, but better yet as a distortion. It is also different from the political elite, since it is found in all strata.

The *estamento*, on behalf of the prince, is the nation's referee, and also its class's referee. It holds the economy materially as if it were the master of its sovereignty.

Within the limits of every definition, which always tends to be oversimplifying, these considerations describe this social category which the Portuguese transplanted to Brazil.

The country's colonization took place under an "estamental" and patrimonial economic order. Later on, it became a state capitalism, highly supported by the bureaucratic *estamento*.

It was, thus, the country's trademark always to depend on the state, even after the Proclamation of the Republican Regime—theoretically considered as a reaction against monarchy, but which maintained the bureaucratic *estamento* unchanged. But the republic was imposed on the people, who were brought down to the rank of animals, as described by Carvalho (1987). In addition to this, "it boycotted every single opportunity to consolidate citizenship."

This economy, dependent on the state, started with the *"capitanias hereditarias,"*[2] which were a king's donation to his "protégés"; but they were inalienable and indivisible, to such an extent that they would eventually return to the donor's possession. The early explorers in Brazil themselves behaved as contractors and managers of the Power because they were used to being the king's commissioners, despite the fact that they were looking for riches and that they sometimes tried to break their commitments.

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Thus, everything in colonial Brazil and in the kingdom of Brazil was delegated. After independence, the empire organized itself as a bureaucratic *estamento* that "nestled into the Executive Power, in the lifelong senate and into the moderating power. This was the first symptom of the mechanism of intermediation and arbitrariness" (Faoro, 1958, p. 204).[3] Lifelong Senates, "bionic senators"[4] are names to label the same reality. The king's "moderating power" or the armed forces are identical categories that bear the purpose of maintaining the "status quo."

Joaquim Nabuco (1915, pp. 280–281) already predicted what is still true today when he wrote: "Since the beginning, the heat, light and life for the larger organizations had come from the Treasury." This fact implicitly includes a high grade of economic and legal regulatory power that the "estamental" state holds, making private enterprise difficult. However, what is even more serious is that organizations found ways to get around such interventionism—that is, they avoided it by associating with the state, standing by its side, and by obtaining subsidies, protectionism, unofficial cartels, and exceptional financing. The government, by subjecting organizations to its will, provided for their needs.

In this way, the *estamento* has embodied the characteristics of a huge *advocacia administrativa*—a way of taking advantage of one's own individual and personal influence before the state in order to get privileges—which has become fundamental to the nation's functioning. Despite the fact that it is necessary to all modern societies, bureaucracy, in Weber's sense, is always conservative. Bureaucracy, in its "estamental" distortion, obstructs the course of change processes because it is an end in itself, a power manipulator, a domination tool. In bureaucracy, formalism predominates in relationships, and it causes the displacement of objectives, a certain accommodation and a disharmony between the written rule and the behavior it induces. Even as a strategy to reduce conflicts, to hide the dualities found in the social structure, and to dissolve downtown-versus-suburb contrasts, such "estamental" bureaucracy is the support of a culture that explains to a great extent the Brazilian people's characteristics and way of life. The popular answer to how to avoid or ignore this spurious usurpation is to create new behavior possibilities (Ramos, 1983) which become, in the course of time, deeply rooted in a culture or in the features of that culture.

The Brazilian *"jeitinho"* as a hermeneutic key for the Brazilian culture

It is in the conjunction of a society organized in the realm of a conservative, patrimonial, and "estamental" state capitalism of a greatly differentiated ethnic background that the Brazilian man was formed, or is still in the process of being formed. The *"casa grande"* (owner's house on a plantation), in a certain phase of this social and economic evolution, where monoculture (sugar) was prevalent, provided the fusion of these traces to happen, as their components shared the same environment and means of living (Freire, 1954). The *casa grande* complemented by the *"senzala"* (the plantation's slave quarters), represented the whole economic, social, and political system—namely, labor and production, religion and sexual life, which have left

marks in the Brazilian people's way of life and behavior. This monocultural system, with supports in slavery and large landed estates—in which the coffee farmer or the *"senhor de engenho"* (the owner and master of large sugarcane fields and sugar mills) was not only the landowner but also the master of men and women—reinforces the ongoing authoritarianism and centralization in the "estamental" government, in colonial, imperial, or even in republican times.

The slavery regime—the base of the entire system—provided the blacks with economic support while they "compounded" with the Portuguese *senhor de engenho*, exchanging culture and blood, and thus incorporating habits, behavior, food, sexuality, and life's rhythm. The *"capoeira"* (a dancelike wrestling practiced by the slaves in Brazil), the merrymaking, the music, most especially the *"samba"* (a popular Brazilian dance of African origin—the center of the yearly *Carnaval*), the *"feijoada"* (a popular Brazilian dish made of black beans boiled with bits of pork and sausage, seasoned with pepper sauce, and served with rice and manioc flour), the *"cocada"* (coconut candy), the seasonings, the *"vatapa"* (a Brazilian dish made of manioc meal, mixed with fish and shrimp), the celebrations, and the religious feasts are clear traces of this racial fusion. Moreover, the cultural syncretism found its way into the official religion of most of the population, Catholicism. The Catholic Church in Brazil has incorporated into its unofficial beliefs the rites and religious practices brought by the blacks from Africa. It is not at all by chance that the patron saint of Brazil, Lady Aparecida, is a black virgin miraculously found in a river (Da Matta, 1986).

All this makes the Brazilian. He is a citizen seeking for his soul in the dialectic profusion of his physical and spiritual components, who has had to develop a flexible, labile, plastic personality in order to survive, live, and build a country. In order to face an oligarchic social system, he developed a *"jogo de cintura"*—a flexibility of body and spirit to deviate from obstacles[5]—an aspect of what can be identified as a key to the Brazilian behavior, the *jeitinho*, a typical cultural feature. We are talking about plasticity and flexibility. The *jeitinho* is the common denominator, the hermeneutic basis from which an interpretation of the Brazilian culture becomes possible. It is not a question of making this one feature absolute, but rather is a matter of using this privileged front door so as to further deepen the exposition. In our analysis, the *jeitinho* provides us with the key for understanding what it means "to be Brazilian," and for deriving some insights into Brazilian management. Of course, the deeper components of *jeitinho* remain to be explored in further research.

Two authors, as far as we know, have elaborated a sociological theory of the *"jeito"*—a way, manner, tact, appearance, adroitness, aptitude, dexterity . . . (*"dar un jeito"*) is a very common expression meaning "to find a way out to")—Guerreiro Ramos (1983) and Roberto Campos (1960).[6] They see *jeito* as the most genuine Brazilian process of problem managing, "despite the contents of the rules, codes and laws," as the latter says, an efficient adaptive process for living in a closed, centralized, "estamental," and formalistic society, with the advantage of avoiding deadlocks, extreme solutions, and paralyzing situations—all outbursts, in short. Because confrontation does not suit the Brazilian social training and way of

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life, this "cordial"[7] facet of the Brazilian is a consequence of the way he interacts with the sociopolitical environment (Holanda, 1976). Such cordiality—which the European etymology cannot thoroughly translate—is the expression of a rich, overflowing, and sensitive world that rejects ritualism and seeks intimacy, in a different way from the almost religious reverence of the Japanese. Because Brazilians are fond of intimacy, they like to use the diminutive suffix "*inho*"—often used as a term of endearment—beginning with *jeitinho*, which does not mean only and strictly *jeito* (way, manner), but rather, a broadly fresh and intimate game. Thus, Brazilians relate on emotional terms and, even in business, they do not eliminate collective outbursts and nonconformity at the level of the people. Their social rebellions were nearly always cruel, if seen and studied in great depth (Rodrigues, 1982). The cordial man does not necessarily imply kindness, but only the predominance of apparently emotional behaviors; the epitomizing of these behaviors is not reflected on a collective level.

To return to the *jeitinho* as an adaptive answer and as the essence of the behavior the Brazilians have found to deal with this sociopolitical heritage, we notice that it is a highly functional and effective device. It bypasses a legal framework full of "texts out of context—technical elaborations that were not born from customs but from a highly oligarchical power" (Campos, 1960).

This mannerism of the Brazilian personality has brought about typical characters in a society full of mediations: the "*despachante*," a kind of spokesman who represents someone's interests before the bureaucratic establishment (because of the nature of the reigning bureaucracy, Brazilians prefer to hire the services of such an agent, rather than waste their time standing in lines to resolve their issues); the *advocacia administrativa*, the several kinds of brokers and mediators present in business affairs. Each of these mediators takes care of someone else's interests in exchange for pecuniary benefits. As Campos (1960, p. 29) describes them: "They patch up the gap between the law and the fact, making possible the impossible, legal the illegal, and fair the unfair. They grant flexibility to a formal and rigid law with excessive logical strictness."

On the political level, the moderating power, which has acted ever since imperial times, is within this mediating line of behavior, as we have pointed out. At first the emperor strategically ruled conflicts from an upper standpoint, even above the constitution itself. Eventually his rule was assumed by the army. But both always intervened in favor of the oligarchies and of the maintenance of the status quo, as it were.

Setting apart power aspects, these mediators are, in fact, institutionalized *jeitinho*. That is why there are in Brazil some laws that simply do not apply.

The simple fact that *jeitinho* exists allows for discrimination. There are laws for everything, a superabundance of them, in comparison with other countries (especially with Anglo-Saxon ones). Thus, it is easier to choose the one law that protects you or the one that punishes your opponents. "*Aos inimigos a lei, aos amigos as facilidades da lei*" (the law for your enemies, the advantages of the law for your friends), the proverb says.

Conflicts must be avoided at all costs. The Brazilian people appreciate euphemisms

(Vinagre Brasil, 1989), which means escaping from the unpleasant, attenuating inconveniences or smoothing over reality. By postponing or watering down conflicts, Brazilians get *around* problems, and that, in a sense, means solving them—in the Brazilian way. Brazilians always escape from the radical standpoints of a confrontation in personal terms. That is why we find such aphorisms as "*deixa estar pra ver como é que fica*" (leave things as they are; wait and see what happens); "*O Brazil é um pais do futuro*" (Brazil is a country that belongs to the future); "*Deus é brasileiro*" (God is Brazilian); "*quem trabalha nao tem tempo de ganhar dinheiro*" (whoever works never finds time to make money); and in a paroxysmal extension, bordering on corruption, these lead to the "*Lei de Gerson*"—Gerson's law—which claims "one must take advantage of every situation,"[8] or that "by giving one receives," which would be a "*lei de Sao Francisco as avessas*,"[9] which was supported by some Brazilian physiologistic politicians (Vinagre Brasil, 1989).

Another very interesting category we may include in Brazil's *jeitinho* culture is that of "*gambiarra*," which is a kind of a nonprofessional, cheap, and quick repair or mending (Paulielo, 1984). *Gambiarra* as a rule "breaks up" in very improper circumstances because the definitive arrangement is always postponed. In this way, a provisory solution becomes a permanent one, despite the risks involved in its adoption.

Brazilians use *gambiarras* to patch up cars, utilities, and even the federal constitution, because it is easier to make a quick repair than it is to give a matter some more thought. In a positive interpretation, *gambiarra* reflects flexibility.

Any analysis of cultural behavior cannot overlook aspects of time and space management. Thus, it is relevant to ask how a Brazilian manages time. We already received some information about this from a North American perspective about the negotiation process. But what do Brazilian anthropologists say? "An hour in Brazil is not enjoyed as it is in the United States regarding rhythm and other living aspects," Ramos (1983) confirms.

According to Da Matta, Brazilian people have differentiated and divergent temporalities: linear time in the outer world, cyclical time at home, and everlasting time in another world. In linear time we are in the realm of organized work, one thing after the other, where routine and repetition predominate; in cyclical time we are at home, all by ourselves, not worried with efficiency or cartesian logic, in a ludic state of mind. These are qualitative dimensions that are inseparable from quantitative ones, and they differentiate and complete each other in the outer world and home spaces. In this way, the Brazilian avoids experiencing a "schizophrenic" time. It is not that other cultures do not incorporate such differences. But here they are much clearer and, paradoxically, more blended because of the importance of the sociopolitical organization, centralized within the state. Following a classification by Ramos (1983), we would say that the utilitarian Taylorian serial time, which makes time a merchandise (time is money), is counterbalanced by the social time one spends at home and during vacations and holidays. The Brazilian escapes from routine and repetition by keeping himself in transit between the two types of time.

Inside organizations, it is during the so-called transitional moments—coffee

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or conversation breaks—when people arrive or leave work, that one time is inserted into the other. Hence, people mark a wedge in the hierarchichal and anonymous environments of organizations.

This expressive time management reflects how the Brazilian views work and the next day. Because, from the point of view of puritan capitalism transplanted to Brazil in its basic Anglo-Saxon ideology, work does not mean *today* but the *future*, such a viewpoint clashes with the Brazilian reality. The stubborn and oligarchic structure of the "estamental" power makes people live life in a fatalistic manner, as destiny and not as construction. It is a little like the fable of the ant and the grasshopper. Brazilian people are the grasshoppers. That is why neither hurrying nor being punctual is worthwhile. Brazil is more than just a country. It is a continent. Its accomplishment is in the future. Its wealth, to the Brazilian, is inexhaustible and therefore one should not hurry, one should proceed slowly and constantly. Brazilian people believe in charismatic leaders and in magic solutions. It is not by chance that the "*jogo do bicho,*" an illegal national lottery,[10] was created—a national institution that, despite its "unofficial" status, is reliable and solidly established. The *estamento,* aware of its existence, creates dozens of lotteries—euphemistic ways of collecting taxes from everyone, including the poor. Then, the future is not history but a game. For the individual, it is not the work that pays off; rather, it is fate that decides if one will be rich or poor. After all, opposites meet . . . but space and time are interdependent. One cannot be managed without the other.

Public time and private time take place in public and in private spaces. Even the "other world's" time is up there and down here in the family memories. In these spaces, intimacy and individuality exist in opposition with depersonalization and anonymity. Behaviors are functions of these spaces and they are inserted inside the logic of these oppositions or of these complementarities.

According to Da Matta (1986), Brazilian society is "relational" because it is integrated through relations between spaces, where it builds transitional bridges. "God is Brazilian," not because with him things will always work out, but, above all, because he is composed—as we are—of three persons or three distinct and absolutely complementary spaces. The father is the outer world, where the state is the relentless universe of impersonal laws, and the son is the home, with his warm relationship, his humanity, and the senses of a person made of flesh and bones. And the holy ghost is the relationship between the two, the other side of the mystery (Da Matta, 1987).

These spaces represented by the home, the outer world, and the other world have activities, specific objects, and time as well-defined and distinct ethics.

Some devices make the transit easier inside these spaces and times, bringing us to the proximity of our daily experiences. They are "breaks" for witticisms and joke telling, to tell about real or imaginary sexual experiences, to have a cup of coffee, to tap someone on the back—in short, to be intimate.

In this three-dimensional world, the *jeitinho* prevails and works as a conflict reducer, smoothing the transit from one environment to another, and thus permitting a conviviality with the dysfunctions of work. The *jeitinho* replaces the law's media-

tion, which does not work among Brazilians, for the home and the outer world are then self-referential. The "individual" and the "person" at times are one, and at other times are opponents, and only the *jeitinho* can bring harmony to these indefinitions. That is why Brazilian people are obsessed with relationships and with personal bonds, so as always to be able to find the key to their own lives. This distinction between the individual (*o individuo*) and the person (*a pessoa*) is another key Da Matta (1987) offers to explain the "Brazilian dilemma." The individual is the impersonal subject of universal laws, while the person is the subject of social relationships, with their emotions and uniqueness. The tendency of Brazilians is therefore to reduce the power of the anonymous individual (or laws) to live and solve processes at a personal level. The outer world, which stands for work, is anonymous, full of surprises, temptations, and insecurity, and is compensated by the home, where Brazilians are personal, have their own bodies, and can keep up the moral dimension of honor, respect, honorability, and shame. This ambiguity is therefore a means of survival. It is also a way of life. "The secret of a correct interpretation of Brazil lies in the possibility of studying what is 'between' things," Da Matta insists (1987, p. 26). The Brazilian *Carnaval* feast is a clear way of linking the home, the outer world, and the other world, or the intimate, the dangerous, and the magical, a typical way of promoting equality by a temporary denial of differences and frontiers.

Even in food, Brazilians care more for pasty dishes. These are "relational" and intermediary, and neither purely solid nor liquid. "*Feijoada*," a stew, "*canjiquinha*," a traditional Brazilian dish of cornmeal and pieces of meat, with pork ribs and cabbage, "*munguza*," a dish of corn with milk, sugar, and cinnamon, with corn and peanuts, "*vatapa*," in which shrimp float on top of the paste, oily with "*dendê*" (an African oilplant grown in Brazil)—these are all almost soups or even solid morsels dipped in something that is almost liquid, in short, pasty.

If the *jeitinho* is taken as a common denominator of oppositions, contrasts, and contradictions, it may not entirely define or explain the behavior of the Brazilians, even if it pictures them realistically. But are we dealing with a matter of definition? The demonstration of Brazilians' sociopolitical and cultural realities by means of the *jeitinho* allows us to find a common root for most of their behavior inside organizations.

These behaviors show a double facet, which makes them contradictory. By being flexible and labile, Brazilians have a chance to face their authoritarian and discriminatory environment, as well as to resist change. This explains why even the negative diagnoses discussed earlier in this paper are accepted, why a certain kind of conflict avoidance is displayed in negotiation, and why the new management technologies (Best Practices) are difficult to implement or do not work out at all.

This double facet of a mediation-type behavior is reflected, in Brazil, through the *jeitinho*. But we cannot ignore the analogies that may come to mind if we turn to other Latin countries. In France and Italy especially, the existence of similar mediation processes is striking. The "system D" in France (where "D" stands for "*débrouillardise*"—resourcefulness) and the "*combinazzione*" in Italy also have this

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double facet. Both of them are means used by individuals and groups to bypass centralization, an excessive rigidity or amount of laws and regulations, the power of the state, authoritarian modes of leadership. Although the "D" system and the "*combinazzione*" help people to live in a satisfactory way with a real amount of flexibility and creativity, on the other hand they disqualify the power of social rules and lead to anarchy, parallel organizations, or mafias (either terrorist in Italy, or intellectual in France through the elitist castes).

Therefore, beyond its hermeneutic value for the understanding of the cultural Brazilian reality, the *jeitinho* can become the living source of further research on the Latin modes of mediation used by people within organizations and society.

Notes

1. Best Practices are linked to administration models—management technologies conceived in developed countries and transferred to the Third World, generally without the necessary adaptation. Examples are: Management by Objectives, Total Quality Control, Just In Time, Zero Defect, among others.

2. In colonial Brazil, the *capitanias hereditarias* was a jurisdictional division corresponding to a province, allotted to a protégé of the prince.

3. The moderating power meant that the emperor and, after him, the army, had the role of a referee in the political game, deciding over parties and Congress if the "estamental status quo" was in jeopardy.

4. The bionic senators were a class of senators nominated by the president during the military government in Brazil. They corresponded to a certain percentage of the Congress that had a greater representation.

5. This idiomatic expression was originally used to signify the way Brazilians play soccer as if they were dancing the *samba*. They used a swing of their hips to avoid their opponents—to deviate from the opponent's path. In life, it means the Brazilian has to avoid difficult situations.

6. See also Viera, Da Costa, and Barbosa (1982).

7. "*O homem cordial*"—the cordial man who reflects the myth of a mixed-blooded society.

8. Gerson was a world champion Brazilian soccer player who used this expression as a slogan in a cigarette advertisement. The fact that it took on a pejorative connotation at the time upset him.

9. Cardoso Alves, a member of the Brazilian Parlement, first used this expression in an interview in which he supported the "*fisiologismo*" of the politicians—that is, a supportive attitude adopted by some politicians toward the government in exchange for favors. "*As avessas*" means the other way around. San Francis is the author of a well-known prayer that says that by giving, one is already receiving. And Cardoso Alves was giving his support to the government, not taking into consideration the people's interest, but only his own.

10. The "*jogo do bicho*" was created by the Baron of Drummond in Rio de Janeiro to reward the visitors to his zoo. Today it is run by bookmakers. It is a highly reliable lottery network because it never fails to pay the prizes.

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