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Source: *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 48, No. 4 (Aug., 2004), pp. 573-598

Published by: Sage Publications, Inc.

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4149809>

Accessed: 23-11-2017 15:04 UTC

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Thai and U.S. Community Mediation

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The approaches of 111 Thai and a matched set of 111 U.S. community mediators are investigated. Results show that Thai mediators are more apt to be assertive in their mediations; they put disputants together, demand concessions, criticize disputants, and threaten them more frequently than do U.S. mediators. Thai mediators more frequently seek harmony by asking disputants to forgive each other and to apologize.

Keywords: mediation; Thailand; conflict; harmony

Nestled among Myanmar to the west, Laos and Cambodia to the east, and the warm salt waters of its gulf to the south, Thailand is centrally positioned in Southeast Asia. Often referred to as “The Land of Smiles,” this pleasant nation has a rich culture and history, which underpin its ages-long use of mediation to attain social harmony.

In this study, we investigate Thai community mediation and compare it with mediation in the United States. To do so, we first delineate Thailand’s national characteristics; subsequently, we hypothesize how these affect Thai community mediations and compare these with mediations in the United States.

THAILAND’S NATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

The delineation of a nation’s characteristics can take many forms, but one that seems adequately parsimonious, as well as lucid, entails a fourfold division:

AUTHORS’ NOTE: We would like to thank Widchaporn Wangspa, Porngarm Virutamasen, and Pacharaporn Iamsuda for helpful comments on earlier drafts of this article. Our appreciation goes also to Somchai Maunsaiyat, Vitoon Thititanapak, and Widchaporn Wangspa for assistance with Thai data collection; as well as to Natalie Cleeton, Marisa Hollingsworth, Kathi Kynerd, Nellene Howard, and Eric Mullen for assistance with U.S. data collection. We would also like to acknowledge support from a Utah State University new faculty research grant. The data used for this study are available at www.yale.edu/unsy/jcr/jcrdata.html.

JOURNAL OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION, Vol. 48 No. 4, August 2004 573-598

DOI: 10.1177/0022002704265947

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1. the nation's institutions and environment, which are somewhat socially distant from the individual citizen (such as the country's government, economy, and level of industrialization) but do impact on the individual's behavior;
2. social institutions, such as the local government, with its structure, the law, and established social practices;
3. close social relationships, such as family structure and religion; and
4. the individual's characteristics.

INSTITUTIONS AND ENVIRONMENT

Applying this blueprint to Thailand, we note that Thailand is predominantly a rural society, which has a constitutional monarchy based on democratic principles. Although democratic, the government's norms and practices strongly reflect the hierarchical characteristics of the Ayudhya government (1350-1767), which entailed a strict vertical structure with the king at the apex and a complex hierarchy of superiors and subordinates below. Thai governments—past as well as present—have fostered the current belief that citizens should obey their superiors, that is, those with socioeconomic status or status based on age or governmental position (Lissak 1973; Suksamran 1976; Wongsith 1994).

The most distant governmental position is the governor, and reporting to him or her is the *nai amphoe*, who oversees a district. Typically the district is divided into village groups (communes), which are administered by a *kamnan*. Reporting to him (the *kamnan* is usually male) is the *phuyaiban*—the headman of the village (Ingle 1983).

Although the governor and *nai amphoe* are quite removed from the average Thai villager, the *kamnan* and *phuyaiban* often have a personalized, one-on-one relationships with the villagers (Ingle 1983), especially if the *kamnan* happens to live in the same village. Villagers interact frequently with their *phuyaiban*, and to some extent with the *kamnan*. In these interactions, the villagers may request either to mediate their disputes. Both typically meet this request and provide the service (Ingle 1983). The *phuyaibans* do so because they are responsible for maintaining harmony in the village and usually feel a personal obligation to the villagers (Turton 1976). The *kamnans* may occasionally mediate because they have the same responsibility to maintain peace and order in a set of villages.

SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

In addition to the *phuyaiban* and *kamnan*, the Thai villagers' proximal social arena typically contains a cluster of monks. In most villages, they are located in a *wat* where they are overseen by a head monk/abbot. The *wat* serves as the symbol of the population's commitment to Buddhism and usually as the social center for the village where the villagers mix with each other and the monks (Neher 1974). Because of their physical, social, and religious location, the senior monks are occasionally called on to serve as mediators (Songsamphan 1996; Suksamran 1976). They are solicited for this task because they are trusted and regarded as impartial and because villagers strongly prefer them to the courts (Suksamran 1976), which can be expensive and sometimes corrupt. These monks willingly provide mediation, because doing so brings status and

allows them to comply with and apply the Buddhist precepts to pursue harmony and to reduce ill will (Harvey 1990).

Intuitively, it might seem that the legal system would also be categorized as a relevant social institution (category 2, above), but for many reasons, it is not. One is location: usually the district office or the police station, which handles disputes, is rather distant from the villagers' homes (Bilmes 1992). The district offices are also avoided because their procedures are not well understood and are judged to be tedious, expensive, arbitrary, sometimes corrupt, and guided by the norm of "guilty until proven innocent." The police and lawyers are considered dangerous. A more personal reason for avoiding them and the overall legal system is shame. In general, Thais believe that people go to court only when they have been accused of a crime, and they know that the gossip that follows such an incident will result in a lengthy, if not persistent, blemish on one's reputation.

CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS

Shifting to the third category—close social relations, we note the primary occupant is the Thai family structure. Typically, it is an extended arrangement with many related families located in the same village. Within and between these related families, the older male members are respected, consulted about important decisions, and asked to mediate disputes (Turton 1976; Wongsith 1994). Across families, local elites—usually older males—can be called on to make decisions (Ingle 1983) and to mediate.

Just as important as the family structure is the Buddhist religion, which cuts across three categories of national characteristics. As an organized group within the village *wat*, its monks serve as a social institution; as a set of beliefs practiced by relatives and associates, it is intertwined with the individual's close relations; and as a guiding set of moral principles, it can be considered a component of the individual Thai's character or belief system.

More than 90% of Thais are Theravada Buddhists (Ingle 1983), and they seem to take their religion quite seriously. Like most religions, Theravada Buddhism is complex, but one aspect of it is simple and straightforward: it places very high value on harmony among people.

Instead of emphasizing that harmony and goodwill should be pursued to please a deity, the Buddhist religion focuses on the individual, whose life entails a continuous cycle of birth, living, death, and rebirth until perfection or truth is obtained. Each person's lot in the current life is a result of his or her karma—merits for good deeds and demerits for bad deeds—and this karma is influenced by present as well as future deeds. In the pursuit of these merits and avoidance of demerits, the individual is expected to promote peace and harmony and to avoid extreme mental states (Fieg 1998).

Buddhism also encourages individuals to forgive and apologize to others so as to express tolerance and compassion for them (Wells 1960). It is felt that opposing, pressing, and overcoming another person today will simply come back to haunt one in another life. It is better to forgive and apologize because doing so accomplishes three objectives: it benefits the other in that he or she is no longer held accountable; it bene-

fits oneself, because it gives an inner calm (the mainstay of this life and the next); and it contributes positively to one's karma and future outcomes (Goddard 1932; McCullough, Pargament, and Thoresen 2000).

As it counsels Thais to seek harmony, to forgive, and to apologize, Buddhism also advises obedience to those above them in the social hierarchy (that is, those in official positions or with economic status and older individuals and persons of higher social rank), because compliance contributes to the collective harmony. Such subservience, it is held, strips away personal willfulness, self-centeredness, pride, ambition, self-assertion, and selfishness, all of which reduce harmony among people (Carmody and Carmody 1996).

INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS

From a mediation/conflict reduction perspective, the most important Thai personal characteristics are a low tolerance for conflict (Roongrengsuke and Chansuthus 1998) and a generally accepted obligation to have smooth relationships and resolve conflicts (Komin 1996; Phillips 1966). Not all Thai people are able to live up to these cultural norms, but it appears that many Thais respond to these cultural norms by choosing to mediate conflicts. In the West, conflict is thought to have a Janus nature, concomitant negative and positive sides. It is considered dysfunctional when different goals, perceptions, motivations, and beliefs lead to hostility and low cooperation. In contrast, conflict is felt to be constructive when it exposes differences, underpins constructive discussion of differences, and leads to creative solutions. In this cultural milieu, turning to mediation to resolve conflicts may occur less frequently.

Thais do not view conflict in this way; rather, they see it as more or less destructive. One reason for this judgment is that, to Thais, conflict is the opposite of social harmony, which they hold as a central belief. They also feel that maintaining good relations is more important than task accomplishment (Roongrengsuke and Chansuthus 1998). They believe that conflict risks and usually results in loss of face for one or both parties.

As the previous sentence implies, "face" is quite important to citizens of Thailand. They believe that exhibiting a good image in public is important and that one should behave in a manner that allows others to have a good image (Phillips 1966; Roongrengsuke and Chansuthus 1998). This motivation to maintain face for self and others dovetails with the Thais' harmony orientation and motivates Thais to be accommodating to others, to soften their position in conflicts, or to withdraw from them and apologize for behavior that generated the conflict (Fieg 1998).

A final personal characteristic is Thai collectivism. Thais are collectivistic (Schwartz 1994) although less so than other Asia Pacific cultures, and therefore they wish to save face; seek to avoid conflict; and are hesitant to engage in direct confrontation when misunderstandings, disagreements, or conflicting goals arise. When these situations do occur, Thais are apt to use a respected third party as a mediator (Roongrengsuke and Chansuthus 1998). Third-party assistance may be requested by one or both disputants, or the third party may intercede on his or her own initiative whenever disagreements are detected.

The preceding delineation of Thailand's national characteristics and the indication that Thais frequently rely on mediation spawn two follow-up questions: how do the Thais mediate, and how does their mediation differ from that in other countries? To answer these queries, we first selected a comparison country; subsequently, we developed hypotheses about the intercountry differences in mediation, collected data in the two countries, and tested our predictions.

We chose the United States for the comparison country, primarily because its national characteristics are quite different from those of Thailand. Using the United States allows us to explore the effects of these differences on the mediation approaches in the two countries.

U.S. NATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

The national characteristics of the United States include rural as well as urban sectors, and its government is structured as a democracy with no background of monarchy or vertical social system. In the rural sectors, the local officials, such as mayors, councils, and county commissioners, do interact with the population but do not feel a responsibility to personally assist in citizens' disputes unless the disputes involve city/county services or properties. In this case, community leaders become participants in the dispute rather than mediators.

The religious institutions are primarily Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish, and in most areas they are centers for some social activities. Within these institutions, the ministers, priests, and rabbis (respectively) may be called on to assist in members' disputes, but they do not view this mediation as one of their primary responsibilities. The set of beliefs of the three religions have an adversarial overtone rather than one of harmony. (For example, evil is viewed as the enemy of good; therefore, devout Protestants, Catholics, and Jews are expected to oppose evil and be victorious over it.) Because they are rather egalitarian, these religions do not dictate obedience to those of higher social status.

The court system is viewed in the United States as the principal arena for handling disputes. Here the process is an adversarial one in which justice is the goal. This is felt to be best achieved when each side strongly represents its own case, attacks the opposing side's case, and allows the judge or jury to decide who won (Wall and Stark 1998).

This goal of justice is pursued more strongly in U.S. than in Thai courts. In Thailand, the goal of justice was grafted onto the law between roughly 1870 and 1920 as a result of Western imperial pressure. However, the fit has been less than perfect because Thai traditions and law stress harmony more than justice.

It is to be noted that families in U.S. communities are generally nuclear rather than extended. Children typically move into their own homes when they marry and infrequently consult with their parents or other family elders on decisions.

U.S. residents are also very individualistic (Schwartz 1994) in that they strongly believe in individual rights and pursue their own interests, even when doing so infringes on the interests and outcomes of others. This individualism is very consistent with the most distinguishing characteristic of U.S. citizens, that they enjoy, value, and

are comfortable with competition (Wall and Stark 1998). The roots for this trait lie not only in the Judeo-Christian religion but also in the Americans' pioneer heritage, their success in wars, the economic tradition, their sports that emphasize winning, and the method for selecting government officials (a win-lose election process).

It should also be noted that U.S. citizens do not draw a strong distinction between competition and conflict. For them, conflict is simply a heated form of competition, and there is an ambiguous overlap between the two processes. This perceived overlap and the belief that conflict has its benefits as well as its dysfunctions motivate most citizens to accept moderate levels of conflict. When conflicts and disagreements do exceed the tolerable levels, they are to be managed by the disputants themselves, because the conflict is considered to be theirs and not the community's, and they have the right to resolve it themselves. If the disputants cannot resolve it personally, the conflict is taken to court where an adversarial process decides who wins and who loses the dispute (Wall and Stark 1998).

THAI VERSUS U.S. MEDIATIONS

Having selected the United States as the comparison country and succinctly delineated its relevant national characteristics, we now broach the central question of the study: how do Thai mediations differ from those of their U.S. counterparts? To answer this query, we need to consider two issues: first, the techniques utilized by the Thai and U.S. mediators, and second, the effects of Thailand's national characteristics (versus those in the United States) on their mediators' approaches.

MEDIATION TECHNIQUES

Table 1 presents a list of the techniques that can be used by mediators in both countries. This classification system is a modification of the one supplied by Pruitt that was developed, refined, and utilized by his teams while studying U.S. community mediation (Pruitt et al. 1989). Over the years, it has been modified to include additional techniques (e.g., meeting with third parties present) that we have found being used in Asian Pacific community mediation.

EFFECT OF NATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

When we consider the effect of the Thai and U.S. national characteristics on the utilization of these mediation techniques in the two countries, few effects occur for the first 19 techniques (that is, through "mediator assists"). That is, we can detect no reason why the Thais' respect for social hierarchy, their court avoidance, collectivism, and appreciation of harmony would affect the frequency with which the Thai (versus the U.S.) mediators use the first 19 techniques in the list in Table 1.

In contrast, when we focus on the next four, more assertive, techniques—"put disputants together," "demand concessions," "criticize," "threaten"—it seems reasonable to propose a broad band of effects.

TABLE 1
Mediators' Techniques

<i>Technique</i>	<i>Description</i>
Meet separately with disputants	Meets with disputants separately; respectively.
Meet together with disputants	Meets with disputants together in a meeting that is taking place. Also has disputants state their point of view to the other.
State other's point of view	Mediator presents or argues other disputant's point of view. Also includes asking a disputant to see the other disputant's point of view.
Written agreement	Has disputants sign a quasi-legal written agreement governing their future behavior.
Pray	Have a prayer alone, or with one or both disputants.
Break time	Stops the quarrelling; has disputants get rest/rests. Picnic, get-together.
Relax	Mediator makes specific statements to calm the disputants.
Formalization	Caps the agreement with techniques other than a drink.
Gather information	Mediator collects or asks for information from the disputants or others. Also leader does research to obtain information.
Listen to disputant's side	Mediator has disputants state their points to him or her.
Gather information from third parties	Information, opinion, and advice obtained from third party.
Mediator's data	Mediator provides objective data about the dispute or the environment (e.g., inflation is 20%).
Suggest concessions	Mediator suggests a specific concession or agreement point.
Educate	Mediator educates, persuades, or advises one disputant as to how he or she "should" in general think or act.
Example	Cites example or similar case.
Moral	Mediator points out a specific moral obligation or societal norm.
Quote law or rule	Mediator quotes a specific law or rule that is relevant to the dispute.
Provide logical explanation	Mediator backs up any technique with logic.
Mediator assists	The mediator personally offers or gives assistance. Mediator takes a specific action.
Put disputants together	The leader brings the disputants together for a meeting that otherwise would not take place. For example, asks the disputants to meet at his or her house.
Demand concessions	Mediator demands a specific concession or agreement point.
Criticize	Mediator criticizes a disputant's person, attitude and behavior.
Threat	Any threat from the mediator.
Obtain forgiveness	Mediator asks one disputant to tolerate or forgive the other.
Apologize	Mediator has one disputant apologize or acknowledge his or her faults.

(continued)

TABLE 1 (continued)

<i>Technique</i>	<i>Description</i>
Cite dependency	Mediator expresses similarities or interdependence in disputants' goals, fates, and needs. Includes mentioning personal costs of disagreement and benefits of agreement.
Call for empathy	Mediator enhances the other disputant or calls for respect of the other. She or he puts a positive face on the other disputant, noting he or she is a good person.
Note cost of third party	Mediator points out costs of dispute to others, cites an obligation to others not to dispute. Includes noting benefits of agreement to others.
Meet with third parties present	Mediator brings additional third disputants to a meeting.
Have third party educate	Mediator has a third party to educate, persuade, or advise one or both disputants on how they "should" think or act.
Have third party argue for concessions	Mediator has a third party to argue for or propose a specific concession or agreement point.
Have third party criticize	Mediator has third party criticize a disputant's person, attitude, or behavior.
Have third party assist	Mediator offers or gets third party's assistance for the disputants or the mediator.

In general, it can be argued that Thai mediators have more influence over the disputants than do U.S. mediators, and they capitalize on this by applying assertive mediation techniques. The Thai mediators' influence, we emphasize, is not based solely on official/legitimate power. Rather it has a very broad base. *Phyaiban* and *kamnans* have status in the villages, not just official positions. They also are typically older and thereby merit respect. Monks have religious standing; they are trusted and regarded as impartial. Similarly, in addition to holding legitimate power, bosses also have status, age, personal relations with their employees, and control of resources. Mediating elders are held in high esteem because of their longevity.

In the United States, community mediators do not have a strong or broad power base. Even if the mediators had power, the disputants would resist their influence because U.S. citizens do not readily accept the exercise of power.

Now to our specific reasoning. Thais turn to an array of mediators—*phuyaiban*, *kamnans*, monks, elders, and bosses (Songsampham 1996)—who have a strong, broad power base. Do they wield this influence? Pruitt et al.'s (1989) position/retort is affirmative and quite straightforward in that they contend that power elicits authoritarian behavior from mediators, encouraging them to dictate terms. A similar theory-based explanation for the mediator's use of power can proceed along three avenues, one each from the goal, expectancy, and reinforcement theories. From goal theory (Locke 1991), it can be argued that a mediator has goals, and because these goals guide the mediator's behavior (Conlon, Carnevale, and Murnighan 1994), a powerful mediator, just as a powerful negotiator (Callister and Wall 2001), can be expected to use his or her power to accomplish them. In a similar fashion, expectancy theory (Vroom 1964; Wood, Atkins, and Bright 1999) maintains that mediators with power exert their influence because they expect its application will be instrumental in leading to outcomes (agreements), which are of high value to the mediator. Finally, reinforcement (Luthans and Keitner 1985; Siero et al. 1989) and learning (Bandura 1997) theories support the claim that mediators with a broad base of power—*phuyaibans*, *kamnans*, elders, and so on—find that their utilization of influence in mediations results in more agreements and harmony (i.e., positive consequences) than do mediations in which they do not use their influence. Therefore, powerful (Thai) mediators are reinforced for using their power and continue to use it in their mediations.

In the United States, on the other hand, the individuals who mediate do not have as strong a power base—official positions, economic status, age, or higher social rank—as the Thai mediators. Even if the U.S. mediators did have a broad power base, U.S. disputants would not accept its utilization. Hofstede's (2001) research on power distance, which refers to a country's acceptance of power inequalities among people, supports this reasoning. Thailand falls in the top half of the power-distance rankings among the 53 countries and regions studied by Hofstede; specifically, it is in 21st place. The United States falls in the bottom half of the ranking in 38th place. The U.S. rank suggests that the U.S. culture would be less accepting of higher levels of power in its mediators. U.S. mediators, therefore, infrequently use assertive techniques, and U.S. disputants have low tolerance for them.

Hypothesis 1: Thai mediators will more frequently put the disputants together than will U.S. mediators.

Hypothesis 2: Thai mediators will more frequently demand concessions (or agreement points) than will U.S. mediators.

Hypothesis 3: Thai mediators will more frequently criticize the disputants.

Hypothesis 4: Thai mediators will more frequently use threats in their mediations.

We also predict differences between Thailand and the United States for the next four techniques—"obtain forgiveness," "apologize," "cite dependency," and "call for empathy"—that mediators may use to maintain and improve the relationship between the disputants. We hypothesize that the high value Thais place on harmony and face maintenance will strongly encourage the use of the first two techniques, forgiveness and apology. Such a prediction is based on the logic, theory, and findings in the value literature.

The literature maintains that values affect people's behavior because the values are (or delineate) the goals that serve as guiding principles for their behavior (Kluckhohn 1951; Rokeach 1973; Schwartz 1992, 1994). People engage in value-directed behavior to accomplish these goals, because the goal has a terminal value (end state) that a person wishes to accomplish, or because the goal is instrumental to a desirable end state (Meglino and Ravlin 1998).

Applying this theory to mediation, we note that the Thai harmony and face-saving values (Carmody and Carmody 1996; Roongrengsuke and Chansuthus 1998) delineate two goals for Thai mediators. In the pursuit of these goals, Thai mediators engage in the value-directed behavior of calling for apologies and asking disputants to forgive each other, not only because harmony and face-saving have terminal value (that is, value in and of themselves) but also because they are instrumental to the resolution of the conflict.

The effect of these values on the Thai mediators' behavior will be enhanced because their application of the techniques is public, visible to the disputants, and perhaps to other third parties. As Meglino and Ravlin (1998) have correctly noted, such visibility has an amplifying effect, because it allows society to approve or reward the value-consistent behavior.

It seems that Thai collectivism would underpin the utilization of the third technique in this group—"cite dependency." Because Thais believe they are highly interdependent on each other, it is reasonable to predict that a mediator would cite this dependency as he or she attempts to manage the dispute.

We proffer an hypothesis for the technique "call for empathy/respect" but do so with some reservation. Given that Thais place a high value on face, it is reasonable to predict that Thai mediators would delineate the positive characteristics of the disputants. However, it seems that this technique would be utilized only when the disputants were meeting together in a mediation. In separate meetings, it is more likely that apologies would be called for.

We predict that the U.S. mediators' utilization of these four techniques will be low, that is, lower than the Thai usage. Because they do not place a high value on harmony or face-saving, U.S. mediators will not be motivated to call for apologies, forgiveness, or respect. Because Americans are individualistic and think of themselves as rather independent of each other, U.S. mediators are less likely to cite disputant interdependency (for example, "You're both in this together") as they mediate.

Before formally stating the hypotheses developed above, we note that the logic and conclusions in them are supported by works (Leung et al. 1992; Takaku, Weiner, and Ohbuchi 2001) that have shown that harmony-enhancing procedures (e.g., forgiveness) for conflict resolution are endorsed and utilized more often in collectivist than in individualistic societies.

Hypothesis 5: Thai mediators will more frequently call for forgiveness than will U.S. mediators.

Hypothesis 6: Thai mediators will more frequently ask for apologies.

Hypothesis 7: Thai mediators will more frequently cite disputant interdependence.

Hypothesis 8: Thai mediators will more often call for empathy for the other person.

Turning to the next, third-party, techniques (Table 1), we find ourselves with one solid prediction and some ambivalence. The well-grounded prediction pertains to the technique of emphasizing the cost of the dispute to third parties. Because they are collectivistic, Thais maintain and interact within cohesive groups (i.e., more cohesive than U.S. groups), which they seek to please and serve. The members of these groups are Thais who value and are pleased by intragroup harmony; they find conflicts within their ranks discomfiting, if not embarrassing. Cognizant of this sentiment, Thai mediators are apt to point out the costs of disputes to third parties and advise the disputants to resolve the dispute for the sake of these group members.

Because U.S. disputants are individualistic, they are less apt to be concerned with the effects of their disputes on others. Realizing this, U.S. mediators will less frequently advise disputants to settle the dispute for the sake of third parties.

Hypothesis 9: Thai mediators more frequently employ the "cost to third party" technique than do U.S. community mediators.

For the other third-party techniques, we are hesitant to offer any predictions for differential use in U.S. and Thai mediations. We were rather certain that such techniques would not be employed frequently by U.S. mediators, because they, like the disputants, would feel that the disputants are responsible for settling their own discord.

We realize that the Thai mediators, as collectivists, would have some inclination to ask third parties to advise the disputants, to bring them to the mediations, and to ask the third parties to criticize the disputants. Yet we also recognize that such techniques require considerable effort from the mediators. Therefore, these techniques are likely to be eschewed in favor of less costly ones.

METHOD

STUDENT INTERVIEWS

As noted above, the literature indicates that *phuyaibans*, *kamnans*, senior monks, and average citizens mediate disputes in Thailand. To corroborate this finding, we conducted short interviews with 40 Thai students at Utah State University and the University of Missouri–Columbia. We asked the students where they were from in Thailand and engaged in some general discussions about the country (for example, climate, food, job opportunities, economic conditions, etc.). Subsequently, we asked how a dispute would be handled in their neighborhood.

Although there were some differences in the responses, a clear pattern seemed to emerge. The students from the cities indicated that city residents handle their conflicts in a manner similar to city dwellers worldwide. Specifically, they tolerate the conflict, manage it themselves, and/or call the police.

From the village residents, we received a very different report. Whenever a dispute arises in a village, the disputants very quickly and almost automatically take it to a third party (other than a policeman). Typically these third parties are the *phuyaiban*, *kamnan*, a senior monk, or a high-status member of the community. Given this corroboration, we began the study of community mediation in Thailand versus that in the United States.

PARTICIPANTS

The participants in the study were 111 mediators from towns and villages in Thailand and 111 U.S. mediators from U.S. communities.

PROCEDURE

Our previous studies in China, Korea, Japan, and Malaysia (Callister and Wall 1997; Kim et al. 1993; Wall and Callister 1999) demonstrated that citizens of these countries could be trained to be proficient interviewers. Therefore, we recruited three Thai graduate students who were very fluent in English. After training them in interview procedures, we sent them to Thailand.

In Thailand, they relied on their own initiative and contacts with friends, relatives, and associates to obtain interviews with *phuyaiban*, *kamnans*, senior monks, and other individuals who had mediated disputes in the community. When interviewing these mediators ($n = 111$), the interviewers used the same procedure we had employed in previous studies of Chinese, South Korean, Japanese, and Malaysian mediation. Specifically, each interviewer conducted structured interviews asking the mediator to recall the last dispute that had come to him or her. Subsequently, the interviewer asked each respondent to note the nature and context of the dispute and the persons involved in it. Next, the mediators were asked to recall the specific steps they took to assist or to resolve the dispute and finally to describe the agreement or lack of agreement between the disputants.

The mediators' responses were recorded in Thai and later translated by the interviewer. Using the categories outlined in Table 1, two Western raters read the mediators' reports of the steps taken to resolve each dispute and independently scored all the mediation techniques. When differences occurred, the raters conferred and agreed on acceptable classifications for each technique. As noted earlier, the classification system was a modification of the one supplied by Pruitt that had been developed, refined, and used by his teams while studying U.S. community mediation (Pruitt et al. 1989). We relied on this list of techniques in previous studies and added new categories when they became salient.

We interviewed a broad spectrum (in terms of occupation, age, income level, gender, etc.) of U.S. community residents ($n = 200$) who were not official mediators or trained as mediators and asked them to recall a dispute they had mediated. When we began to match the Thai and U.S. mediators, we noted that the disputes in both countries could be divided into four types: husband-wife, family other than husband-wife, community, and work. Specifically, the Thai sample contained 21 husband-wife disputes, 8 family disputes that were not husband-wife, 57 community disputes, and 25 work disputes. To match U.S. mediators with these, we randomly selected 21 mediated husband-wife, 8 family, 57 community, and 25 workplace disputes from the U.S. sample. The U.S. interviews were conducted by the authors and their research assistants in the same fashion as those conducted in Thailand. The same coders coded the data and in the same fashion as the Thai data.

RESULTS

THE DISPUTES

The interesting observation or conclusion for the disputes is the similarity between the Thai and U.S. sample (see Table 2). In both communities, the husband-wife disputes entail infidelity, drunkenness, drugs, divorce, and child custody. Insults, jealousy, financial problems, and drugs appear to be well represented in both the Thai and U.S. family (other than husband-wife) affairs. The community disputes in both countries offer a similar, rich *mélange* of property disputes, automobile incidents, minor thefts, drunkenness, and noise pollution. The workplace disputes across the two groups entail laziness, sexual misconduct, coordination problems, honest differences of opinion, and behavior of irritating colleagues.

THE MEDIATIONS

As noted earlier, the mediators' reports of the steps taken to resolve each dispute were read by two Western raters. These mediation techniques were scored independently, utilizing the categories outlined in Table 1. The coders' interrater reliability was 90%. (Specifically, 1,805 techniques were scored, and the raters agreed on the classification for 1,619 of them.)

TABLE 2
Sample of Community Disputes

<i>Disputes Mediated in Thailand</i>	<i>Disputes Mediated in United States</i>
Husband-wife	
Husband's cheating on wife	Divorce
Husband abuses wife	Husband's cheating and using drugs
Child custody after forthcoming divorce	Wife has affair
How family funds are spent	Husband is drunk
Family (non-husband-wife)	
Insults between relatives	Bungled wedding plans
Drug addiction	Father is strict with son
Widowed mother is frugal with daughter	One aunt insults another
Parents object to daughter's marriage	Son spending too much on girlfriend
Community	
Stolen necklace	Noisy neighbors
Plowing beyond a boundary line	Dog defecation
Drunkenness and physical injury	Location of fence on property line
Automobile accident	Speeding in parking lot
Work	
Schedule among truck drivers	One worker insults another
Delivery bill not paid	Amount a peer is working
Failure of workers to cooperate	Sexual harassment
Sexual misconduct	How to fix a machine

After the techniques were scored, the data were analyzed to determine how many times each technique was used per case. The average number of times a technique was used in each dispute is presented in Table 3. The data show that both sets of mediators devoted significant time and effort to meeting with the parties; specifically, they met together with the disputants, put them together for a meeting, or met with them separately. In these joint or separate meetings, mediators gathered information from the disputants, listened to their points of view, and turned to others (third parties) for information. During and after the meetings and data gathering, the mediators suggested concessions, stated/presented one disputant's point of view to the other, and in general advised (educated) the disputants on how they should behave.

From this common base, Thai and U.S. mediators diverged in their reliance on the more assertive techniques and in their use of those aimed toward maintaining or improving the relationship between the disputants.

Table 3 indicates that Thai mediators, as predicted in Hypothesis 1, put the disputants together more frequently than did their U.S. counterparts ($M = 0.33$ versus 0.17), $F(1, 217) = 7.05$, $p < .01$. Consistent with Hypothesis 2, Thai mediators also demanded concessions or agreement points more frequently ($M = 0.49$ versus 0.10), $F(1, 217) = 27.23$, $p < .001$. They more frequently criticized the disputants ($M = 0.20$ versus 0.10), $F(1, 217) = 3.77$, $p < .05$, as predicted in Hypothesis 3. They used threats more frequently in their mediations ($M = 0.14$ versus 0.04), $F(1, 217) = 8.08$, $p < .005$. This last finding supports Hypothesis 4.

TABLE 3
Use of Mediation Techniques

<i>Technique</i>	<i>Average Use per Thai Dispute</i>	<i>Average Use per U.S. Dispute</i>
Meet separately	1.36	1.74**
Gather information	1.99	1.64**
Listen to disputant's side	0.35	0.46
Suggest concessions	0.50	0.30*
State others' point of view	0.41	0.40
Educate	0.29	0.38
Gather information from third parties	0.23	0.16
Relax	0.12	0.27*
Meet together	0.24	0.32
Mediator assists	0.11	0.25
Mediator's data	0.14	0.20
Break time	0.12	0.06
Logic	0.13	0.02**
Moral	0.07	0.02
Written agreement	0.08	0.00**
Formalization	0.06	0.00**
Quote law or rule	0.02	0.04
Pray	0.00	0.00
Example	0.00	0.03
Put disputants together	0.33	0.17**
Demand concessions	0.49	0.10***
Criticize	0.20	0.10*
Threat	0.14	0.04**
Obtain forgiveness	0.27	0.00***
Apologize	0.38	0.05***
Cite dependency	0.10	0.06
Call for empathy	0.05	0.14
Note cost to third party	0.28	0.05***
Have third party assist	0.12	0.15
Meet with third parties present	0.10	0.04
Have third party educate	0.00	0.00
Have third party argue for concessions	0.00	0.00
Have third party criticize	0.00	0.00

NOTE: Average use per dispute = number of times a technique was used divided by the number of disputes.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

We find two of the four hypotheses that are meant to maintain and improve the relationship between the disputants were supported. Specifically, as predicted in Hypothesis 5, Thai mediators more frequently requested forgiveness than did U.S. mediators ($M = 0.27$ versus 0.00), $F(1, 217) = 20.87$, $p < .001$. In a similar manner, as predicted by Hypothesis 6, they more often called for apologies to the opponent ($M = 0.38$ versus 0.05), $F(1, 217) = 25.40$, $p < .001$. Thai mediators did use the technique of citing disputants' interdependencies more frequently, but the difference was not significant. A close reading of the Thai mediators' reports indicates these mediators chose to empha-

size the cost of the dispute to third parties rather than noting its detrimental effect on the disputants' relationship with each other.

Somewhat surprising and contrary to Hypothesis 8, the Thai mediators were less apt ($M = 0.05$) than the U.S. mediators ($M = 0.14$) to call for empathy for the opposing disputant or to put a positive face on the other.

The prediction in Hypothesis 9 was strongly supported; that is, Thai mediators more frequently emphasized the cost of the disputants to third parties, such as children, family, and community than did the U.S. mediators ($M = 0.28$ versus 0.05 , $F(1, 217) = 20.15$, $p < .001$). As noted previously, this difference is felt to be based on the Thais' high level of collectivism, which emphasizes the importance of the group and the responsibility to serve. Second, it is probably based on Thai adherence to Buddhist tenets, which indicate that one method for serving the overall group is to maintain harmony.

MEDIATION STRATEGIES

Having examined the Thai and U.S. mediators' techniques and the differences between them, we now focus on the strategies of these mediators. The data in Table 3 provide a general idea of the approaches employed by the Thai and U.S. mediators; however, this collection could hide some of the particular strategies that might be embedded within their general approaches. Consider the Thai mediators. One group of mediators might have met separately with the disputants, gathered information from them, and then transferred this back and forth between them. Another group of Thais, by contrast, could have relied on a strategy of meeting together with the disputants, listening briefly to each side, then dictating a solution and asking each side to forgive or apologize.

We used cluster analysis to identify the specific strategies that the mediators in the two countries used. This is a multivariate statistical procedure designed to organize a sample of entities into groups by using a data set containing information about the entities (Aldenderfer and Blashfield 1984). This procedure is well suited for the type of data in this study because it can organize the mediators into relatively homogeneous groups or clusters according to the mediation techniques utilized in the dispute. Cluster analysis does not require that the clusters represent multivariate normal populations, and it has a distinct advantage over factor analysis in this setting. Factor analysis indicates which techniques load together (i.e., are used together across the entire sample of mediators) in each sample of mediators. However, it does not have the advantage that cluster analysis has of being able to detect distinct groups within each sample of mediators employing similar sets of techniques.

THAI STRATEGIES

As Table 4 indicates, cluster analysis allowed us to sort the Thai mediators into three groups (clusters) whose members used the same techniques. The table also indi-

TABLE 4
Cluster Analysis for Thai and U.S. Mediations

Technique	Average Use per Dispute					
	Thai			U.S.		
	Cluster 1: Meet Separately (n = 43)	Cluster 2: Assertive (n = 22)	Cluster 3: Friendly Persuasion (n = 46)	Cluster 1: Meet Separately (n = 28)	Cluster 2: Assertive (n = 12)	Cluster 3: Laissez-Faire (n = 71)
Meet separately	2.33	0.86	0.70***	2.96	1.50	1.30***
Gather information	1.88	3.23	1.50***	2.64	1.08	1.33***
Listen to disputant's side	0.35	0.50	0.28	0.25	2.58	0.18***
Suggest concessions	0.28	0.18	0.85***	0.71	0.00	0.18***
Demand concessions	0.40	1.18	0.24***	0.14	0.16	0.07
Put disputants together	0.35	0.59	0.20**	0.18	0.50	0.11**
Educate	0.51	0.05	0.20*	0.43	0.42	0.35
Gather information from third party	0.21	0.18	0.28	0.32	0.08	0.11
Meet with third party present	0.07	0.09	0.13	0.00	0.08	0.04
Have third party assist	0.14	0.09	0.11	0.11	0.17	0.17
State other's point of view	0.53	0.73	0.15**	0.71	0.58	0.24**
Meet together	0.02	0.27	0.43***	0.21	0.58	0.31
Apologize	0.49	0.36	0.30	0.04	0.08	0.06
Mediator assists	0.16	0.00	0.11	0.11	0.00	0.35*
Obtain forgiveness	0.28	0.05	0.40	0.00	0.00	0.00
Relax	0.16	0.05	0.11	0.14	0.17	0.34
Break time	0.09	0.14	0.13	0.00	0.08	0.08
Mediator's data	0.12	0.14	0.15	0.25	0.00	0.21
Threat	0.16	0.14	0.13	0.00	0.17	0.03*
Note cost to third party	0.47	0.27	0.11**	0.00	0.08	0.06
Grasp	0.16	0.32	0.13	0.21	0.08	0.03*
Logic	0.12	0.00	0.20	0.07	0.00	0.00
Criticize	0.20	0.32	0.13	0.14	0.00	0.10
Cite dependency	0.14	0.09	0.07	0.07	0.00	0.04
Call for empathy	0.05	0.05	0.04	0.07	0.17	0.15

cates which techniques were employed most frequently by each group (bold cells in Table 4 indicate the techniques employed differentially).¹

In the first cluster, labeled the “meet separately” strategy, Thai mediators met separately with the disputants rather than in joint meetings or meetings in which they put the disputants together. To some extent, they acted as messengers, stating one disputant’s point of view to the other. These mediators were instructive, advising (educating) the parties on how they should behave rather than suggesting or demanding specific concessions. In addition, these mediators, more frequently than the other Thai groups, noted the cost of the dispute to third parties and more frequently requested apologies.

The second group of Thai mediators, the “assertive” cluster, differed from their counterparts in two major ways. They gathered information more frequently and were more assertive in their mediations. Evidence for the assertiveness is found in these Thais’ putting the disputants together and demanding (rather than suggesting) the concessions they should make. It should also be noted that the mediators in this group seldom advised (educated) the disputants and were quite apt to criticize them. Finally, it should be noted that this group is not very large ($n = 22$, or 20% of the Thai sample). This moderate size indicates that although Thai mediators are more assertive than their U.S. counterparts, they should not be considered an assertive group of mediators.

The third cluster of Thai mediators employed a passive or “friendly persuasion” strategy in which they met with the disputants and then suggested (rather than dictated) concessions to them. These mediators also asked for forgiveness more often than did the mediators in the “meet separately” and “assertive” groups.

Before moving to the U.S. clusters, it is worthwhile to note the absence of one cluster for the Thai mediators. There is no group of Thai mediators who used the “apologize,” “note cost to others,” or “forgive” techniques more frequently than the mediators in other Thai groups. Initially, this absence seems to contradict the logic supporting Hypotheses 5 through 8, that Thai mediators would rely on these techniques more frequently than their U.S. counterparts. Yet it does not; it simply indicates that the frequency of use of these techniques is spread across the entire Thai sample instead of being concentrated in one cluster.

U.S. STRATEGIES

Turning to the U.S. mediators (right half of Table 4), we note they also had “meeting separately” and “assertive” clusters; however, the techniques employed in these two strategies were somewhat different from those in the Thai counterparts. The U.S. mediators in the first group (“meet separately”) acted very much as messengers. They met separately with the disputants, gathered information from each, and then stated this person’s point of view to the other side. While doing so, these messengers frequently suggested concessions to each side.

1. The probability levels in Table 4 should not be viewed as a test of the significance of the clusters. Rather, the significance levels, along with the means, indicate which techniques are more frequently used in each cluster of mediators.

The second U.S. group, labeled “assertive,” is a small one, and this number correctly indicates that U.S. mediators, in general, are not assertive. However, those who were assertive did choose to meet together with the disputants or put them together and then listen to their sides. Subsequently, they demanded concessions (rather than suggesting them) and, on occasion, threatened the disputants.

Initially, the data for the third and largest cluster of U.S. mediators is confusing because the usage frequencies are low for almost every technique. It seems the mediators in this cluster did little or nothing in their mediations. This is a correct observation/conclusion, which reflects our earlier arguments that U.S. citizens are hesitant mediators who, when they mediate, seem to do as little as possible, allowing the disputants to solve their own conflict. This approach earns the third cluster of U.S. mediators the label “laissez-faire.”

DISCUSSION

The contributions of this study are threefold. First, it is the original empirically based report of community mediation in Thailand. Second, and perhaps surprisingly, it is also the first empirically based report on U.S. community mediators who do not have mediation training. Third, our data allow for a comparison of Thai mediation to that in other Pacific Rim nations.

We find that the Thai and U.S. mediators both rely about equally on many techniques, such as listening to each side’s point of view, stating the other’s point of view, educating the parties, and obtaining information from third parties. Yet there are differences in the Thai and U.S. mediators’ utilization of the assertive techniques and ones that maintain harmony in society. The prediction and explanation for the Thais’ more frequent utilization of the assertive techniques (putting disputants together, demanding concessions, criticizing the disputants, and threatening them) are based on the Thai mediators’ strong power base and use of it. U.S. mediators, in contrast, do not have this power base, and even if they did, the U.S. disputants would not tolerate its utilization.

Turning to the Thai-U.S. differences for the harmony-maintenance techniques, we reasoned that the Thai mediators were guided by the values of harmony and face-maintenance for the disputants. Therefore, they frequently called for apologies, instructed the disputants to forgive, and so on. The U.S. mediators do not hold to these values; consequently, their use of these techniques was minimal.

A comparison of the approaches used by the Thai and U.S. mediators supported most of our hypotheses, and a subsequent cluster analysis allowed us to determine if the mediation techniques were being used differently among groups within each sample. We found that the harmony-maintenance techniques were not concentrated heavily within any cluster of Thai (or U.S.) mediators. Rather, they were rather well dispersed across the sample.

Our examination and comparisons of the Thai and U.S. data produce results that seem reasonable for the most part. However, the Thai mediators’ low use of the “have third parties present” and “have third party assist” techniques and their eschewal of the

“have third party educate,” “have third party argue for concessions,” and “have third party criticize” techniques are somewhat of a mystery. Because they have power and are collectivists who view people as interdependent with group members, why do the Thai mediators not utilize these third parties as do the Chinese (Wall and Blum 1991) and Malaysian mediators (Wall and Callister 1999)?

Our initial reflection, offered earlier, was that these techniques require more effort on the mediator’s part and therefore are not fancied. However, this is just as true for the Chinese and Malaysian mediators. Perhaps a better explanation is that the Thais, as Buddhists, feel a strong responsibility for establishing harmony in the collective and conclude that calling on others would be somewhat discordant for these parties.

When we compared Thai community mediation with that in Malaysia, Japan, South Korea, and China, we were somewhat uncertain about what we would find. This uncertainty came as a backwash from our examination of the Thai national characteristics and our hypotheses development. Here we concluded that Thai mediators could be characterized by their attention to harmony maintenance as well as their power to resolve the dispute. Because none of the other Pacific Rim nations from which we had data—Malaysia, Japan, China, and Korea—seemed to possess high levels of both characteristics, we were hesitant to assert a strong correspondence between their mediators’ technique usage and that of Thai mediators.

Table 5 provides the international comparisons. Because the periods for data collection, sample sizes, and translators were different for the Thai, Malaysian, Japanese, Chinese, and Korean samples, a comparison of technique usage should be undertaken quite cautiously. However, comparisons of the rank orders do indicate the relative importance of the techniques in each society and provide a base for cross-country comparisons.

An attentive perusal of this table rather quickly reveals similarities between the Thai and Japanese mediations. The correlation of the rank orders is rather strong (Spearman’s $r = .75$, $p < .001$), with very high correspondence within all sectors (beginning, middle, and latter) of the ranks.

Focusing on the techniques for maintaining harmony, we note a strong correspondence for three out of the four techniques. Specifically, the call to apologize has a rank of 5 for the Thais and 6 for the Japanese. “Forgive” is at 10th place for the Thais and 11th for the Japanese; “cite dependency” is at 22 versus 23, respectively. The outlier is the “call for empathy” technique, with the Thais having it in position 26 and the Japanese 10.

We attribute the similarity in these techniques to the strong influence of Buddhism in both countries (Ingle 1983; Nakamura 1969), which places a high value on maintaining harmony among people (Craig 1979; Fieg 1998).

Switching from the harmony-maintenance to the assertive techniques, we find less similarity. Although both the Thai and Japanese mediators made moderate use of the “put together” technique, the Japanese were, in general, less assertive than the Thais. Specifically, they criticized the disputants less, used fewer threats, and more often called for empathy with the opponent.

TABLE 5

Use of Mediation Techniques in Thai, Malaysian, Japanese, Chinese, and Korean Disputes

	Thai Mediation			Malaysian Mediation			Japanese Mediation			Chinese Mediation			Korean Mediation		
	Rank Order	Average Usage		Rank Order	Average Usage		Rank Order	Average Usage		Rank Order	Average Usage		Rank Order	Average Usage	
Gather information	1	1.99		5	0.62		2	0.74		6	0.28		10	0.16	
Meet separately	2	1.36		1	1.79		1	1.93		4	0.38 ^a		1	0.51	
Argue for concessions ^b	3	0.99		3	1.08		3	0.65		2	0.43		5	0.37	
State other's point of view	4	0.41		10	0.27		5	0.48		5	0.30		4	0.43	
Apologize	5	0.38		13	0.16		6	0.43		7	0.26		7	0.30	
Listen to disputant's side	6	0.35		2	1.65		4	0.60		14	0.16 ^a		3	0.47	
Put together	7	0.33		4	0.65		8	0.32		— ^c	— ^c		— ^c	— ^c	
Educate	8	0.29		7	0.46		7	0.38		1	0.67		2	0.49	
Note cost to third party	9	0.28		20	0.05		22	0.03		11	0.22		21	0.02	
Forgive	10	0.27		15	0.11		11	0.15		16	0.14		15	0.06	
Meet together	11	0.24		12	0.17		12	0.14		8	0.25 ^a		6	0.35	
Gather information from third parties	12	0.23		6	0.55		21	0.04		24	0.02		13	0.11	
Criticize	13	0.20		23	0.01		16	0.11		3	0.38		11	0.16	
Threat	14	0.14		19	0.06		20	0.06		21	0.04		22	0.02	
Mediator's data	15	0.14		18	0.07		18	0.07		17	0.10		18	0.04	
Logic	16	0.13		21	0.04		17	0.08		10	0.22		9	0.23	
Relax	17	0.12		16	0.08		13	0.14		22	0.03		23	0.02	
Breaktime	18	0.12		17	0.07		9	0.31		18	0.08		16	0.04	
Have third party assist	19	0.12		9	0.30		14	0.13		9	0.24		24	0.02	
Mediator assists	20	0.11		14	0.14		15	0.13		15	0.14		17	0.04	
Meet with third parties present	21	0.10		8	0.34		26	0.00		23	0.02		25	0.01	
Cite dependency	22	0.10		26	0.01		23	0.02		19	0.06		14	0.07	
Written agreement	23	0.08		24	0.02		25	0.00		20	0.05		19	0.03	
Moral	24	0.07		11	0.23		19	0.06		13	0.20		20	0.03	

(continued)

TABLE 5 (continued)

	Thai Mediation		Malaysian Mediation		Japanese Mediation		Chinese Mediation		Korean Mediation	
	Rank Order	Average Usage	Rank Order	Average Usage	Rank Order	Average Usage	Rank Order	Average Usage	Rank Order	Average Usage
Formalization	25	0.06	25	0.02	24	0.01	25	0.00	12	0.13
Call for empathy	26	0.05	22	0.01	10	0.16	12	0.20	8	0.26

NOTE: Techniques with Thai usage above 0.05 are reported. Average use per dispute = number of times a technique was used divided by the number of disputes.

- a. Technique was measured in only one study.
- b. Technique combines "suggest concessions" and "demands concessions" techniques.
- c. Technique was not measured in these studies.

Given that Buddhism explains the similarity in only the Thai and Japanese use of the harmony-maintenance techniques, what accounts for the hardly overall correlation in their techniques? Seeking an answer, we focused on the top 10 techniques for both sets of mediators (Table 5) where there is extremely high similarity and on the sequence in which the mediators used their techniques.

In general, both sets of mediators began their mediations by meeting together with the disputants, gathering information from them, and listening to each side or by meeting with one disputant, gathering information, listening to its side, and then taking information and ideas to the other side. Subsequent to the meetings, information gathering, and so on, the mediators relied on a mix of techniques (calls for concessions, requests to forgive and apologize, and advice [education] to the disputants) in no apparent order or combination.

What factor would lead to this common general approach? We feel it is the mediator's strong commitment to the resolution of the dispute, a commitment that is based in part on the strong Buddhist commitment to harmony.

Second, it is based on the strong social hierarchy found in both societies. As noted previously, Thailand has a strongly hierarchical society, capped with a king and royal family. Japan also has a strong social hierarchy, complete with an emperor and royal family (Wiersema and Bird 1993), founded on feudalism, paternalism, and a general acceptance of the natural order in nature (Buck 1966).

In these two societies, superiors have a reciprocal relationship with those below them: the superiors are to be obeyed as well as respected, and in exchange, they are to care and provide for those in lower social levels. This responsibility to care and provide serves as the second footing for the mediator's commitment to the dispute resolution. For the mediator, harmony is probably one of the required provisions of this paternalism; therefore, he or she is highly committed to furnishing it.

Before suggesting some future research, we mention two limitations of the study. One is that our Thai sample was opportunistic. As mentioned earlier, the interviewers relied on friends, relatives, and associates to gain access to the Thai mediators. Therefore, the sample is not random and may not accurately reflect mediation in all Thai communities. However, it was a necessary approach because Thai mediators were unlikely to grant interviews to strangers.

A second limitation is that the study is based on the mediators' recall; therefore, there is a bias toward techniques that they can remember. Furthermore, some mediators possibly forgot steps they had taken and perhaps mentioned some techniques that were not used.

This study suggests a number of avenues for future research. Given that mediators' approaches have now been investigated in numerous countries and have revealed significant cross-country differences, a useful next step can be to develop and test theory as to why these variations occur. In turn, predictions can be developed about how mediators will behave in other countries.

For example, it appears that the amount of power that the mediator possesses is predictive of how assertively the mediator will behave. In China, mediators have much power because of their official position in the community, and their use of assertive techniques is quite high (Wall and Blum 1991). In Thailand and Japan, the mediators

have moderate power and use a moderate number of assertive techniques, and in the United States, mediators have low power and infrequently utilize assertive techniques. Given this apparent correspondence between mediator power and assertiveness, it seems reasonable to propose that mediators in communities that grant mediators high power (India, Malawi, Turkey, Saudi Arabia) would be very assertive in their mediations.

Another important predictor of mediator behavior appears to be the value that the society places on harmony and saving face. In some countries, unofficial mediators who may be friends or coworkers feel some obligation to assist in a dispute. For the Japanese, this social responsibility or obligation is referred to as *on*, and it (though balanced against being nosey or *osseikai*) spawns high involvement in mediation. In the United States, which generally lacks the social norm of saving face, we find most potential mediators refrain from involvement because of the risk of being judged as nosey or “not minding one’s own business.” Given these findings, it seems reasonable to predict that countries that value saving face, such as Vietnam and Iran, will have mediators who become highly involved in the mediation and utilize harmony-maintenance techniques.

Future research should continue to build on this emerging theory by adding additional predictors of mediators’ behavior and testing these preliminary hypotheses by using mediator power and value placed on saving face and harmony to predict how mediators in additional countries will behave.

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