

# EL ACERCAMIENTO DE LAS CULTURAS NACIONALES EN LA CONDUCCIÓN DE LOS NEGOCIOS INTERNACIONALES EN BELICE, CENTROAMÉRICA

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## RESUMEN

En este artículo, clasificamos la cultura nacional de Belice a través de las tipologías ofrecidas por Geert Hofstede (1980) y Edward T. Hall (1960). La clasificación permite el uso comparativo de datos culturales existentes para la mayoría de las otras naciones y regiones del mundo importantes para navegar las interacciones culturales en la conducción de negocios internacionales. Como aproximadamente las tres cuartas partes de la economía de Belice dependen del comercio internacional, existe una necesidad fundamental de navegar con éxito en el entorno internacional. Utilizando un grupo de expertos en cultura de Belice, un estudio de Delphi reveló la naturaleza de la cultura nacional de Belice como un punto de referencia en la navegación de culturas. Concluimos con recomendaciones de navegación cultural para y con beliceños involucrados en actividades comerciales internacionales.

**Palabras clave:** Geert Hofstede, Edward T. Hall, cultura nacional, negocios internacionales, Belice

**JEL:** M14, M16, O54

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## NAVIGATING NATIONAL CULTURES WITHIN THE CONDUCT OF INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS IN BELIZE, CENTRAL AMERICA

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### ABSTRACT

In this article, we seek to classify the national culture of Belize through the typologies offered by Geert Hofstede (1980) and Edward T. Hall (1960). The classification allows comparative use of existing cultural data for most other nations and world regions important in navigating cultural interactions in the conduct of international business. As nearly three-fourths of the Belizean economy relies on international trade, there is an essential need to successfully navigate the international environment. Utilizing a group of Belizean cultural experts, a Delphi study revealed the nature of Belizean national culture as a benchmark in navigating cultures. We conclude with cultural navigation recommendations for and with Belizeans engaged in international business activities.

**Key words:** Geert Hofstede, Edward T. Hall, National Culture, International Business, Belize

**JEL:** M14, M16, O54

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## INTRODUCTION

Since the days of the British pirates and baymen (c. 1600s), Belize has been fully inserted into the global economy (Wilk, 2006). The extractive economy, long centered around the logging of Mahogany, defined Belize's early economy and society (Bolland, 2003). More recently, especially since gaining formal independence in 1981 from Great Britain, the extractive industry has been complemented by a vibrant and dynamic tourism industry (Sutherland, 1998; Avila & Pisani, 2021). While business visitors only account for a small fraction of this total, 10,000 to 20,000 in any given year, mass tourism brings 1.5 million visitors to Belize annually (SIB, 2020). The mass tourist sector facilitates intense and varied cultural interactions across the nation. Tourists originate primarily from the United States, Europe, Asia, and Central America and spend over \$530 million in country per year, with the tourism sector contributing approximately 30% of GDP (SIB, 2020). Belize also continues to attract important direct foreign investment, not only in the tourism sector, but also in the natural resource sector (petroleum) and as a retirement site for snowbirds from North America.

It is our purpose in this article to provide “navigation tools” for Belizeans and those interested—tourist or businessperson— in Belize to foster better cultural and business interactions. We utilize two cultural frameworks offered by Edward T. Hall (1960) and Geert Hofstede (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010) to situate dimensions of cultural interactions. These frameworks have served as seminal benchmarks for cultural studies within the international business literature (see Kogut & Singh, 1988; Pisani, 2000). The remainder of this article is organized as follows. Section two provides a richer context of the Belizean environment. Section three provides an overview of the primary cultural conventions and dimensions utilized. Section four details our research methods. In section five we

provide our results. Section six presents a discussion and managerial implications of our findings in comparative form. The last section concludes the article.

### ***The Belize Context***

Belize, formerly British Honduras, lies on the eastern or Caribbean coast of Central America, bounded on the north and part of the west by Mexico and on the south and the remainder of the west by Guatemala. Belize is a small and relatively under populated country with over 400,000 ethnically diverse inhabitants (SIB, 2020) in an area about the size of Massachusetts (8,866 square miles). Interestingly, the ethnic makeup of Belize straddles both the Caribbean and the Central American environs. Noted sociologist and Belizean specialist O. Nigel Bolland argues that “Belize is unusually racially and culturally heterogeneous even for a Caribbean or Central American country” (Bolland, 1986, p. 45). Belize achieved full independence on September 21, 1981 and the government of Belize is operated on the principles of a parliamentary democracy based on the Westminster System (Shoman, 1994).

There are six administrative districts (similar to counties): Belize, Cayo, Corozal, Orange Walk, Stann Creek and Toledo. Ethnically, the districts to the north (Corozal and Orange Walk) and west (Cayo) exhibit a heavy “Spanish” influence from Mexico and Guatemala and El Salvador. This Spanish influence is a legacy of the Caste Wars of the Yucatan (Mexico) over 150 years ago when both Maya and Mestizos fled Mexican oppression. The Cayo District is historically made up of Mestizos and Maya. More recently, immigrants from Central America, primarily from Guatemala and El Salvador because of civil unrest, violence, and poverty, have reinforced the Mestizo population. Yet a growing population of Creoles are also present, a result of the movement of the capitol from the coast to the interior.

The colonial cultural hearth, Belize District, is populated with mostly Creoles who are descendants of African slaves who performed much of the log cutting which was the economic mainstay

of the early colonial period. The far southern province of Toledo is primarily Native American (Maya), a function of its remote location and Maya tenacity for survival. Stann Creek, just south of Belize, comprises a plurality of Garifuna, though Creoles and Mestizos comprise a substantial proportion of Stann Creek, making the district the most ethnically heterogeneous district. The Garifuna are a distinct ethnic group originating from escaped African slaves and Carib Indians forcibly removed from the eastern Caribbean to the Gulf of Honduras by the British at the end of the eighteenth century. Later, a splinter migration of Garifuna landed in Belize by 1802 (Bolland, 1986). Bolland (1986, pp. 44-45) describes more recent demographic and geographic patterns as follows: “the Creole community is still concentrated in Belize City and the surrounding region, the Mestizos are largely in the north, the Garifuna in coastal communities in the south, the East Indians in rural Corozal and Toledo, the Kekchi (Maya) in rural Toledo, and the Mennonites in the villages in Cayo and Orange Walk.”<sup>1</sup>

Importantly ethnic groups co-exist relatively peacefully with Mestizos, Creoles, and Maya making up the largest ethnic groups (47.5%, 26.2% and 9.9%, respectively). Other ethnicities with at least three percent of the total population include the Garifuna (6.7%), Mennonites (3.6%), and East Indians (3.9%). All other ethnic groups make up less than one percent of the population; these include Blacks/Africans (0.5%), Caucasians/Whites (1.2%), and Chinese (1.0%) (SIB, 2013). While English is the language of instruction in school, Spanish, Creole, Maya (various dialects), Garifuna, and German are commonplace and are spoken by 56.6%, 44.6%, 10.5%, 2.9%, and 3.2% of the population, respectively. Few Belizeans speak only English at home. Additionally, Chinese (0.9%) may be found

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<sup>1</sup> According to Boland (1986, p. 26), historical community patterns were set in place by the middle of the eighteenth century: “the mostly English-speaking, Protestant, Creole people of African descent centered in Belize Town; the mostly Spanish-speaking, Catholic, Maya and Mestizo people living chiefly in the north and west; and the Garifuna on the southern coast.”

spoken in a handful of homes (SIB, 2013). Correspondingly, Belizeans are multi-lingual and live in a multi-racial milieu.

The economy of Belize is based on agricultural development (primarily sugar, citrus, bananas, fish products and timber) and eco-tourism, with a 2020 per capita income under \$5,000. International trade (imports and exports) account for 70% of the nation's output as measured by gross domestic product (Pisani, 2007). Belize, for good or ill, is wholly inserted into the global economy. The major population center and economic hub is Belize City, harboring over a quarter of the nation's population. The pristine cayes, unspoiled jungle, extended barrier reef, and ancient Maya pyramids attract more than a million yearly (mostly cruise ship) tourists to Belize where eco-tourism and archaeological tourism have become the mainstays of the tourism industry (Avila and Pisani, 2021). The remaining districts are agricultural in base (e.g., sugar, bananas, citrus, and fisheries) with Cayo and Corozal as important entrepots with Guatemala and Mexico, respectively.

### ***Literature Review***

Within the international business literature, the study of culture has a long and rich tradition.<sup>2</sup> The work of Geert Hofstede (1980), a Dutch professor of organizational anthropology and international management, propelled the intersection of culture and international business to prominence in the field. The work of Hofstede on national culture is often considered the standard or baseline within international management and as such has dominated much of the literature on the subject.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See for example the early work of Terpstra and David (1985) in their textbook, The Cultural Environment of International Business.

<sup>3</sup> In a large-scale effort to update the work of Hofstede, the GLOBE project confirmed much of Hofstede's work, expanding in some areas, and very much complicating the parsimonious work of Hofstede (House et al., 2002; Hofstede, 2010). The work of Hofstede remains foundational and is widely used, taught, and comparable and thus is used in our present study of Belize.

Yet, others have also made important and lasting contributions, such as cultural anthropologist Edward Hall (1959), whose work predated Hofstede. Edward Hall is widely known for introducing high and low context communication styles and various silent languages in his studies of national culture. While Hall is a mainstay of the anthropological literature, his original work is less well-known in the international management literature and is often subsumed and popularized by others (see for example Meyer, 2014).

We briefly define both terms: international business and culture. International business “is business whose activities are carried out across national borders” (Ball et al., 2004). Pisani (2000, p. 25) defines culture as “a learned, shared, and interrelated set of specialized behavioral patterns, understandings and adaptations of a like group of people.” In combination, international business and culture comprise the bulwark of international management. In the present study, we utilize the cultural typologies of Hofstede and Hall to analyze the national culture of Belize emphasizing the business context. An overview of the cultural typologies is offered next.

### **Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions**

Hofstede has developed a classification system in which universal cultural dimensions allow for comparisons across national cultures. Of note, Hofstede uses the nation-state as the proxy for national culture understanding that there may be various other sub-cultures that exist. We follow Hofstede’s convention and refer to national culture and country as synonyms—recognizing that national culture as a proxy for country—throughout this article. From his typology (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010), we formally employ five cultural dimensions: 1) power distance; 2) uncertainty avoidance; 3) masculinity/femininity; 4) collectivism/ individualism; 5) time orientation; and we informally address

their latest (or sixth) dimension of indulgence/restraint.<sup>4</sup> Hofstede suggests that these dimensions should be considered before doing business and/or making negotiations in or with other countries. Hofstede claims that whether on a vacation in a foreign country or negotiating deals in other countries, these cultural factors are important to know (Avila, 2009).

### ***Power Distance***<sup>5</sup>

Power Distance is the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions (like the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. This represents inequality (more versus less), but defined from below, not from above. It suggests that a society's level of inequality is endorsed by the followers as much as by the leaders.

### ***Uncertainty Avoidance***

Uncertainty Avoidance deals with a society's tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity; it ultimately refers to man's search for "truth". It indicates to what extent a culture programs its members to feel either uncomfortable or comfortable in unstructured situations.

### ***Masculinity/Femininity***

Masculinity versus its opposite, femininity, refers to the distribution of roles between the genders, which is another fundamental issue for any society to which a range of solutions are found. It also focuses on the degree the society reinforces, or does not reinforce, the traditional masculine work role model of male achievement, control, and power. Additionally, masculine societies are more aggressive and assertive while feminine societies are more nurturing and cooperative.

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<sup>4</sup> A newly created sixth cultural dimension, indulgence vs. restraint, post-dated our Delphi study. Nonetheless, we offer our informal diagnosis of this dimension within the Belizean context as an update to the Delphi study.

<sup>5</sup> The definitions of Hofstede's cultural dimensions follow Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov (2010).



### ***Collectivism/Individualism***

Individualism on the one side versus its opposite, collectivism, is the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups. On the individualist side, we find societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after him/herself and his/her immediate family. On the collectivist side, we find societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, often extended families (with uncles, aunts and grandparents) and work environments which continue protecting them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty.

### ***Time Orientation***

Time orientation focuses on the degree the society embraces, or does not embrace, long-term devotion to traditional, forward-thinking values. Time orientation centers the present or the future as a focal objective.

### ***Indulgence/Restraint***

The indulgence versus restraint cultural dimension addresses gratification. Indulgent cultures engage in free and wanton gratification in the here and now to fulfill human desires, have fun, and enjoy life. National cultures displaying restraint on this dimension reject gratification now and see such wanton needs as excesses outside social rules.

### ***Hall's Cultural Dimensions/Silent Languages***

Edward T. Hall (1960) likewise made early discoveries of key cultural factors or dimensions he termed the “silent language of business”. These include the “silent” languages of time, space, things, friendship, and agreements. These cultural influences are silent in that they are not verbal (overt), but that are quite loud (hidden) in terms of the effects they have on personal development, relationships, and so on. Consequently, in the everyday but unspoken give-and-take of human relationships, the “silent

language” plays a vitally important role. Hall has analyzed the many ways in which people “talk” to one another without the explicit use of words or with nuanced language (Hall, 1960).

### ***The Silent Language of “Time”***

The handling of time is one of Hall’s key elements or dimensions of culture. Time is one of the fundamental bases on which all cultures rest and around which all activities revolve and refers to how one spends time. Understanding the differences between monochronic time and polychronic time is essential to cross-cultural success. Monochronic time is characterized as linear, tangible, and divisible. In monochronic time, events are scheduled one item at a time and this schedule takes precedence over interpersonal relationships. Polychronic time, on the contrary, is characterized by as “the simultaneous occurrence of many things and by a great involvement with people” (Hall & Hall, 1990, p. 14). The language of time, therefore, explains whether a country sees time as fixed in nature or not and if the view of time is characterized by discreteness, necessity for scheduling, linearity, and orientation towards the future or not.

### ***The Silent Language of “Space”***

Space refers to the invisible boundary around an individual that is considered personal. This sense of personal space can include an area or objects that have come to be considered that individual’s territory. Space is therefore referred to as the interactive distance that is acceptable in cultures as it relates to personal body space to space in the office, parking space, and even space at home. Of course, such space is organized differently among cultures as some people need more space than others in all areas and the interaction distance is much less in some countries than others. Space establishes the conditions that support people being together and communicating or the conditions for separation and isolation.

Hall uses space to describe set measurable distances between people as they interact as well as the (un)orderliness of surroundings.

### ***The Silent Language of “Things”***

Things refer to the degree of materialism or the love of things that people of a country possess as compared to others. Things also refer to what a national culture sees as important that characterizes their position as and in society. In some countries, the material goods or titles that one possesses is what earns him/her respect whilst in other cultures material goods and titles do not play a major role in characterizing oneself.

### ***The Silent Language of “Friendship”***

Friendship concerns the establishment and maintenance of friends and may refer to the degree in which quick friendships are formed or slow developing. Also important are how the development (or not) of strong social ties and reciprocity are formed and preferred. In some countries, people place more emphasis on friendships and networks whilst in other cultures the reverse is true.

### ***The Silent Language of “Agreements”***

Lastly, the language of agreements refers to the degree to which the qualities of the interpersonal relationships between businesspeople are much more salient than the details of written contracts. Related is Hall’s discussion of high and low contextualized communication (Hall & Hall, 1990). High context communicators embed and encode verbal messages and exchange business through meaningful personal relationships whereas low context communicators may transact business codified and guaranteed through the written word regardless of personal relationships. A country may be categorized as high or low context based on its tendency to cater towards in-groups, a group that has similar experiences and expectations, from which inferences are drawn. In a high context culture, many things are left unsaid,

and it is expected that the things left unsaid are implicitly understood; in effect, the culture itself explains them, leaving outsiders at much more of a loss. In contrast, in a low context culture much more is explained through written words or verbalization, instead of the context. Low context cultures make much less extensive use of similar experiences and expectations to communicate.

In essence, the silent language of agreements refers to the way people stipulate contracts and relates to commitment(s) entered. Written documents countersigned by lawyers may be the best agreement in low context cultures whilst verbal agreements with the testimony of the community may be more significant in high context environments. Table 1 offers a composite of the cultural dimensions from both Hofstede and Hall.

**Table 1**

*Brief Description of the Cultural Dimensions of Geert Hofstede and Edward Hall*

Cultural Dimension	Description (Cultural Orientation)
<b>Geert Hofstede</b>	
Power Distance	The degree of accepted inequality in society
Collectivism/Individualism	The building block of society, the individual or in-group as the base unit
Femininity/Masculinity	Gendered societal roles (static or dynamic); Nurture or aggressive societies
Uncertainty Avoidance	The degree of accepted ambiguity
Time Orientation	Time horizons, short-term (present) or long-term (future)
Indulgence/Restraint	Instant gratification or circumscribed gratification
<b>Edward Hall</b>	
Language of Time	Refers to how one spends and orders time
Language of Space	Physical distance; Size, density, and orderliness of surroundings
Language of Things	Material possessions, status of possessions
Language of Friendships	The nature and make-up of friends
Language of Agreements	Commitments agreed upon

## METHODOLOGY

Hofstede and Hall did not study Belize; therefore, no primary data from either author exists for Belize regarding the nexus of culture and international business. Within the constraints of accessing organizational and national information within the Belizean environment, the authors undertook a qualitative Delphi study to determine the nature of the cultural dimensions present in Belize. The essence of a Delphi study is to construct and constitute a panel of experts to study phenomenon in which all the participants have specialized knowledge. Linstone and Turoff (2002, p. 3) in their text devoted to the Delphi method argue that “Delphi may be characterized as a method for structuring a group communication process so that the process is effective in allowing a group of individuals, as a whole, to deal with a complex problem.” They further suggest that the Delphi method is appropriate for “gathering current and historical data not accurately known or available” (Linstone & Turoff, 2002, p. 4).

Belizean experts in the field of Belizean culture and business were assembled in two Delphi sessions to categorize Belizean culture, with special reference to business, within the cultural framework of Hofstede and Hall. The first author, a natural-born Belizean with extensive ties to the professional community through her work at the national university, invited through correspondence and follow-up conversations, known Belizean cultural experts to participate in the Delphi studies. More than three-quarters of invitees agreed to participate. Demographically, experts represented various Belizean subgroups—Garifuna, Maya, Creole, Mestizo—and gender (four women and six men). The professional backgrounds of the Delphi experts included historians (institutional and instructor), social anthropologist, director of the House of Culture, cultural community activist, and an international business professor.

The use of qualitative data produced in-depth, comprehensive information and sought a wide understanding of the cultural typologies under consideration. However, the findings cannot be extended

to wider populations with the same degree of certainty because the findings of the research cannot be tested to discover whether they are statistically significant or due to chance.

Nevertheless, because all participants in the Delphi group were “experts” in culture, the qualitative data we believe is still fairly representative of the Belizean culture (Avila, 2009).

Two separate Delphi studies were undertaken, one in June 2007 and the other in March 2009. Those assembled participated with informed consent. The timing and age of the studies fall within Hofstede’s consideration of culture as enduring, reflecting little change over time (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010).

The first session categorized Belizean culture based on Hofstede’s five cultural dimensions. As our first Delphi study predated the indulgence/restrain cultural dimension, the indulgence/restraint dimension was not included. [The authors do include an exploratory discussion of the indulgence/restraint dimension later in this article.] The second session categorized Belizean based on Hall’s silent language of time, space, friendship, things, and agreements, and included a further discussion on high and low context communication.

The Delphi sessions were then held with the first author being the facilitator (with the second author attending the session discussing Hofstede). Each Delphi session commenced with a welcome and introductions, followed by a review of the agenda and session goals. For the first session, the facilitator also provided each participant with information on Hofstede’s five cultural factors and the questions to be addressed for each dimension. The session ran for approximately two hours; each dimension was discussed for approximately twenty minutes each. At the end of each discussion, a consensus was arrived as to rate Belize on a scale of 1 – 100, with 1 being very low and 100 being very high. Reaching consensus took time and considerable effort because of the different cultures that exist in Belize;

however, the ratings given by the group was believed to be representative of the Belizean culture in its entirety.

To have collected data, a recording device was used by the facilitator to record the two sessions. As participants spoke during the sessions, their information was recorded. The purpose of the apparatus was for the authors to get any information that was not written down as the sessions progressed. A transcription of the tape recording, in addition to notes written down during the sessions, was then used to analyze the data. After the sessions were completed, the facilitator closed the session by thanking the participants, inviting them to be a part of the reference list and ensuring them that they will get a copy of the research report. Snacks were also provided.

A similar procedure was followed for the second Delphi session. At this stage, information was also given on Hall's cultural dimensions and how to identify low from high context cultures. After a few days had passed, the first author contacted the prospective participants for their willingness to participate. Out of twelve invited cultural experts, eight were able to attend the session. The discussion lasted for approximately two and a half hours – approximately forty minutes was used to categorize Belize as having a high or low context culture and approximately one hour and a half was used to discuss the different languages of space, time, language, things and agreements as it related to Belize. At the end of the session, participants were thanked for their participation and they were then invited for a small snack.

## **RESULTS**

In this section we report our results of each Delphi study, first the cultural dimensions of Hofstede and then of Hall.

## ***Geert Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions and Belize***

Each of the Hofstede cultural dimensions is discussed separately below.

### **Power Distance**

Belize was categorized as having a high power distance. There exists a certain distance among the people of the country. The distance is evident when it comes to titles and jobs most of all. People expect to be addressed based on their marital status, titles earned, offices held, etc., in essence their station in life. This is expected not only as a form of respect, but also to show recognition and appreciation for the hard work and time invested in becoming who one is. Titles, especially among the elders, are important. People are addressed using his or her title only. A Ph.D. or a physician is expected to be called “Doctor”. Teachers prefer the title “Teacher”, a government minister is to be called “Honorable”, etc. In politics, for example, employees working under the different ministers are expected to follow directives as given, whether such directives are ethical, unethical, or questionable. The “boss is always right” because he/she is the boss, and the subordinates must simply follow orders. On many occasions, employees of the government get themselves into trouble because of following unethical directives given by higher level supervisors. When the “truth” emerges, it is the subordinates who are the ones blamed, even though they were only following directives from the higher ups.

Additionally, the power dynamics of education plays a crucial role in the Belizean culture. This is because the more education one possesses, the more one is looked up to by society; hence educated people are typically expected to be smarter and successful, regardless of actual intelligence or achievement. Power distance, however, is man-made in that there are many forces that create the distance between the poor and the rich or the educated and the non-educated. Belizeans have allowed the accepted



inequality between power and wealth to grow within the society. It is therefore, not subverted upon the population, but rather acknowledged and accepted by society (Avila, 2009).

Belizeans in the country, despite their distance in power, contribute one way or another to the society. Apart from the socio-economic ranking system, when it comes to prestige, power, and wealth, there is not only the element of defining them but also how much do Belizeans self-identify as to differential status. For example, how much does the drain cleaner identify himself/herself as being on a different level than the bank teller. Consequently, Belizeans cannot easily fight the power distance that exists, but one can create one's own distance based on how one self-identifies with others. The high power distance in Belize is indicative of a greater inequality between societal levels, including government, organizations, businesses, schools, and even within families (Avila, 2009).

### **Uncertainty Avoidance**

Within Belize, there exists a low level of tolerance for uncertainty, lack of stability, and economic security; Belizeans do not deal with ambiguity well. Additionally, Belizeans do not readily accept change and are very risk averse. Because there is a high level of uncertainty, the country has many rules, laws, and regulations in order to reduce uncertainty. Uncertainty avoidance ranks high among Hofstede's cultural dimensions in Belize (Avila, 2009).

In schools, for example, Belizean students would consider answering a question only if they are absolutely certain of the answer. The first author has experienced this both as a student and a teacher where most Belizeans display intolerance to uncertainty. Also, in Belize, it is considered good to exhibit harmony at work, while avoiding disagreements with one's employer.

That is one of the reasons that most Belizean workers adopt a submissive stance in their organization, whereas on the other hand, workers in other countries such as the U.S. often engage in debates as they consider ambiguity an important part of their work culture.

In Belizean politics, new ideas are not encouraged; instead, most Belizeans prefer to stick with the current system and/or structure. Over the last decades, other parties attempted to break the two-party deadlock. Independent parties (e.g., VIP) or candidates who may have had the capability of doing well for the country were mostly rejected not based upon capability, but rather because most Belizean voters refuse to change or give them a chance. In essence, Belizean voters prefer to stick with the two parties that have always existed—the PUP (People’s United Party) and the UDP (United Democratic Party). They know what these parties are capable of (whether positive or negative) and prefer not to risk something new.

### **Masculinity/Femininity**

It is the cultural dimension of masculinity/femininity that is the most dynamic in Belize and has undergone significant and dramatic change. In the not-so-distant past in Belize, the norm was that men dominate. Men dealt with everything outside the home and women were to remain at home and take care of the home and children. The society was said to be a ‘macho’ society. However, in Belize today, there now is a balanced degree of gender differentiation and roles. Men no longer dominate a significant portion of the society and power structures, and families are no longer controlled solely by men.

In many families, men are simply absent and female controlled. Belize used to preach masculinity, but the real picture now is that many women are managing houses, offices, and businesses. There still, however, seems to be a small degree of masculinity when it comes to the political system. In Belize, the best campaigners for the political parties are the women, the most educated gender in the

country is women; yet women have yet to reach the top of the political system. Increasingly, a woman understands that once she can maintain herself, she doesn't need a man.

By nature, it is said that men and women are different because they are born with inherent differences and that men are supposed to be the providers. However, today Belizean men are not taking up their traditional roles and they are not taking education seriously. One study done by a University of Belize social anthropologist revealed that in all the tertiary (higher education) institutions in the country, 75% were women with one exception being the Agriculture College (a still male dominated field). This alarming statistic illustrates that the once masculine society is undergoing dramatic and dynamic change whereby if the trend continues; Belize could even become a feminine society (Avila, 2009).

What weakens the idea of femininity is that women themselves see society as masculine (one that it was) but one that is no longer so. Nevertheless, many women in the country have freed themselves from the idea that they must be of service to others, particularly men. Women now occupy senior positions in offices, they attend universities unrestricted, and they hold a wide range of jobs without explicit discrimination. Women in Belize now have jobs as engineers, doctors, lawyers, professors, etc. Fewer and fewer Belizean men qualify for professional positions due to their lack of appropriate training and skills. Surely then, there is an overwhelming need for recognition of women because they have come a long way from living in highly masculine society to one that is more balanced and trending feminine (Avila, 2009).

While before men were expected to be assertive and women quiet, women are now being assertive and stepping up to claim their places in society. No longer are women accepting that they are only to be at home, be tender, caring, and keep quiet. While being nurturing and being a caretaker are inherent qualities in mothers and women in general, no longer do they accept the shorter end of the stick by receiving less pay than men for the same job; or, having men dominate them. Women are now working

for what they want, speaking up for what they deserve and making men understand that the playing field is becoming even.

### **Individualism/Collectivism**

The pull between collectivism and individualism is undergoing increasing tension in Belize. Rooted in Maya, mestizo, and Garifuna subcultures are a reliance on the collective or group. Yet the centuries-long Anglo colonial influence and dominant economic system has altered and weakened Belize's traditional collective value systems. In addition, influential forces promoting individualism—the media and politicians—while allowing people to become more informed, has had a deleterious effect on the spirit of collectivism. Many parents and other elders are foregoing collectivism idea, passing on to the children and youth a more individualist orientation.

Politics can be taken as an example in which most people who run for office have proven to work only for themselves and their extended family (in-group) and have forgotten that it was the people of the country who allowed them to reach where they are. Society's norms are now different than the pre-Independence past which now allows for a once collectivistic society to now become individualistic. It has often been heard by society that “once you get an education, you are to help yourself.” This is an example of the change in norms which now have altered the nation's collective roots toward one now dominated by individualism. Education is now to develop oneself rather than developing the nation on a whole. As a former English colonial country, Belize has transitioned into an individualistic system. Even the Mayas who were highly collectivistic, have now been broken up by their very own people. Belize has been forced into an individualistic mind frame and now do not know how to use it, so it is evident that families are falling apart. Because of the politics and systems that now exists; each is to

their own rather than for the group. People in Belize generally stand for themselves bearing the concept “*I will survive and, I will do what makes me happy.*”

In Belize, people stress on personal achievements and individual rights. Belizeans expect from each other to fulfill their own needs. Group work is important, but everybody has the right of his/her own opinion. Belizeans have relatively loose bonds with others; for example, subordinates and their managers rarely have a close or personal relationship outside of work.

Also, evident in schools is that when students are given group work or pair work, they would prefer to do it individually rather than depending on others to complete the task given. In general, the populace is more self-reliant and looks out for themselves and their close family members.

### **Long Term/Short Term Orientation**

Belize was found to be a country that does not reinforce the concept of long-term orientation. This is easily visible in Belizean culture because Belizeans want to make money quick; in general, they prefer quick results. For example, when a dollar is made, Belizeans want to spend two dollars; when someone wins the lotto, they quickly spend it on purchasing new cars, etc. rather than saving and/or investing. There is a local saying in Belize, sarcastically, “How do you become a millionaire? Begin with two million.”

There is much corruption in the country, such as in the politics. Some politicians do what they want and make plans to win elections now rather than making plans for the next ten to fifteen years for the country; they hardly focus on long-term development plans. This is not one-sided as many voters readily agree to accept a \$100 bill from a politician in return for a vote, rather than voting for the person based on whether or not he/she is capable of leading the country in the right direction. The people in the country rarely worry about what such a person will do for the country, once they have collected their

money from the politician, they would vote for them. This short-term orientation ranking in Belize is indicative of the society's belief in meeting its immediate obligations, the people are more orientated towards the past and present and are more static and less forward looking.

### **Indulgence/Restraint**

This last cultural dimension is informed by our decades long research into the culture and business environment in Belize as this dimension post-dated the Delphi sessions. We suggest that Belizeans are best characterized by indulgence. Indeed, the Delphi participants noted under their discussion of time orientation that there is an emphasis on immediate gratification of needs and the attainment of short-term goals in Belize (Avila, 2009). If having it now means circumventing the law, then Belizeans are apt to do so (Pisani & Pisani, 2018).

Belizeans typically can poorly manipulate their impulses or urges. They basically do what makes them feel good now without worrying about later. As an example, Belizeans would impulsively purchase an outfit, shoes, do their hair, nails, etc. to attend a concert, spend to purchase the concert ticket, purchase liquor at the concert, get drunk and have a nice time, then the following day, they are unable to pay their bills or feed their children. Their focus is primarily on being gratified at the moment and infrequently worrying about the future. Similarly, they would spend \$2,000 purchasing the latest iPhone which would give them short term happiness, rather than investing the money wisely to reap returns in the future. Belizeans generally do what feels good rather than do what is right; and, generally have poor control over their desires and impulses. This could also explain the reasons why lots of relationships end in turmoil because cheating, drinking, being irresponsible, etc., feels good, though it has no long-term benefits. This indulgent culture inhibits people from focusing on long-term goals and postponing pleasure to achieve more important goals.

Based on all information gathered, it is believed that the Delphi group was accurate in rating Belize for each of Hofstede’s Dimensions as a consensus was reached by all participants for each cultural dimension and typical examples and situations were provided for each rating. To further reiterate, all participants were ‘experts’ in culture and were very knowledgeable of the culture of the country and its people. We also insert our conceptualization of the indulgence/restraint cultural dimension. See Table 2 for an overview of Hofstede’s cultural dimensions and Belize.

**Table 2**

*Delphi Results of Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions in Belize*

<b>Cultural Dimension</b>	<b>Ranking</b> (Scale = 1-100)	<b>Range</b> (Scale = High, Middle, Low)
Power Distance	60	High (in Power Distance)
Individualism > Collectivism	60	High (in Individualism)
Masculinity = Femininity	50	Middle (equal in Masculinity/Femininity)
Uncertainty Avoidance	80	High (in Uncertainty Avoidance)
Time Orientation, Long-term < Short-term	15	Low (in Long-term Time Orientation)
Indulgence > Restraint	n/a	High (in Indulgence)

*Note: Ranking scale, 1 = low, 100 = high.*

### ***Edward Hall's Cultural Dimensions and Belize***

Each “silent language” within Hall’s typology is offered below as well as a supplementary discussion of high versus low context culture in Belize.

#### **The Silent Language of Time**

Concerning Hall’s language of time, in Belize the time required to get something accomplished depends on the relationship – a local term has even been developed called ‘having stripes’ to describe this phenomenon. The more power one has, the easier it becomes to get favors done as compared to the lesser power that one might possess—the high power distance that exists in Belize dictates such behavior. More important people get fast service from less important people and less important people get slow service from more important people.

Belizeans like to set deadlines for things as a way to indicate that it is urgent and the more important an event is, the more time one needs for preparation. Waiting in an outer office is not much of a big deal for Belizeans; that is expected, especially if the person one wants to meet is considered important. This is another instance that supports the high rating of Belize’s power distance based on Hofstede’s perspective.

In Belize there is no problem with making people wait all day, and then tell them to come back the next day. This occurs frequently in government offices when people would go to see the Minister and they would be told to sit and wait. A couple hours after, the Secretary would then tell them that the Minister is unavailable, or in a meeting and that they need to come back another time. In Belize, time is not seen as infinite or endless, but rather time is perceived as plentiful and flexible. When an event is set to start at a certain time, many a times, it starts after the planned time. Time is seen as polychronic



because in the Belizean culture, multiple things are done at one time. For example, in a manager's office, the manager could be having a meeting but if the phone rings, he/she normally would answer it as well; or if a visitor stops by, he/she would entertain them, even if it is not for a long while. While interruptions may not be valued and desired, they are accommodated because of the open door policy that is common.

Belizeans generally see no issue when a meeting scheduled for 10 am starts at 10:30 am; and, yet they would still spend time catching up on each other's personal lives rather than accomplishing the objectives of the meeting because personal relationships hold more value than the task at hand. Additionally, Belizeans are flexible in their time schedules and find precise time tables to be mind boggling; for example, Belizeans are used to going to a bus stop and just waiting on a bus without knowing whether they will be waiting for 10 minutes, 20 minutes or 30 minutes. This is just how it is in Belize; many times, no specific schedule is strictly adhered to.

### **The Silent Language of Space**

As for the language of space in Belize, it is relatively easy to know how important someone is just by looking at the office space they possess. People who are seen as more important have the biggest office space. For example, the principal in a school will surely have the biggest office, the vice principal the next biggest, and the teachers each have their own little area/cubicle in one big room. Again, this example supports Belize's high power distance rating previously discussed. Likewise, in government offices, the CEO will have their own space whilst other workers will need to share space in the same office. The size and location of offices are both considered as very important because they express status and power. The executives' offices would be equipped with air conditioning units before the subordinates' offices.

In addition, Belizeans like their private personal and household space—they do not like to share space for they feel very uncomfortable (in concert with individualism discussed above). It is preferable if “each is to their own”. Belizeans have distinctive places which they call “mine” and don't want them to be “disturbed”. Personal things especially like cars should rather be avoided to be “touched” without permission or treated differently from that as the owner would treat it. The same counts for houses, grounds, and offices. They should not be accessed without a detailed and explicit allowance. In Belize, it is an attack to a person's space and personal territory when kissing or touching someone without “agreement”. The distance between people should be kept and will be dissolved by shaking hands only.

### **The Silent Language of Things**

Belizeans, just like the Americans are seen to be very materialistic. As a matter of fact, Belizeans tend to imitate (and be influenced by) much of the American material culture (as portrayed in the popular media and from emigrant accounts), wanting everything that America has such as gadgets, clothing, etc. Everything from clothes to houses is looked at in order to ascertain one's status. In Belize, material possessions are shown and seen as one of the main ways in which success is determined. Many Belizeans like to judge people based on what they see a person owns rather than by what they know about the person. In Belize “money talks”; if you possess no money, then you are rarely ever looked at, and time is not even wasted on you. People in Belize sometimes buy loyalty with high salaries, just as in the U.S.

### **The Silent Language of Friendship**

Friendships are very important in Belize and friend networks are a way of getting ahead. In Belize, to get forward, it is important to know people who can “pull strings” on one's behalf. Education alone is not sufficient. An educated person, without knowing the “right” friends, finds it is much more

difficult to get anywhere or move ahead. On the other hand, someone with little or no education but with the “right” friendship network may be propelled to success based upon friendship connections. In most cases in Belize, friends will not let one down, but they must be real good friends. Apart from this in-group friendship network, Belizeans look after their own self-interest.

### **The Silent Language of Agreements**

In Belize, there are written and well-defined rules, laws, and regulations that are generally followed when doing business. There also exist moral practices and informal customs that everyone understands—the unwritten rules. Belizeans prefer to conduct business with some form of written agreement or contract. When a contract is signed, this means that negotiations are over and the deal is sealed. A person’s word is no longer acceptable as a form of binding agreement, but rather paperwork with a signature must follow.

Yet, informal patterns and unstated agreements often lead to problems. For example, when catching a cab, Belizeans would ask the price when the service has already been provided. In such a case, the price is either fair or unfair but must be paid. The bargain cannot happen after the fact, which is a very common custom in Belize. At the end of the day, the only thing the person can do is say nothing, complain or not catch the same cab again. One major problem in Belize as well is that many times people feel Belizeans have agreed to things that they have not. In this case, Belizeans fail to recognize binding obligations which thus causes problems.

### **High/Low Context Communication**

The Delphi study also revealed that Belize is a country with a mostly low context communication culture. In accordance with the high rating for uncertainty avoidance, inherent in Belizean culture is

communication that is clear and explicit where one does not need to “read between the lines”. Thus, the reason why many rules, laws, and regulations exist and enforced to reduce uncertainty so that things are not taken for granted. With contract agreements especially, Belizeans want to ensure that information is clear and explicit to them before they enter into agreements. Whilst this means that more explanation is needed, it also means there is less chance of misunderstanding especially when dealing with foreign people. Contracts therefore tend to be longer in order to explain details. If aspects of the contract(s) are unclear, Belizeans seek out lawyers to clarify them before entering into agreements. In essence, Belizeans take nothing for granted.

In addition, Belizeans possess a low commitment to relationships; they are more interested in getting a job done to make a living rather than forming out-group relationships with others. People do not generally look out for one another, creating fragile bonds between them, thus truly being individualists á la Hofstede. In Belize, people generally demonstrate little care or concern for others; instead, they look out for themselves and their immediate family (in-groups) because they are more individualistic; they try to see what they can get for themselves and sometimes their family. Their actions exhibit little sense of loyalty. Loyalty especially is not evident and exercised when it comes to politics. Consequently, a strong sense of family is waning in Belize. Family values in many respects are dying; it is becoming a culture where it is each to their own. Increasingly, Belizeans rarely care about how things are done, once they get it done— who gets affected in the process is not much of importance to them. The task is more important than relationships.

In politics especially, the blaming of others is very common. Politicians do not take blame for their own failure but rather they are likely to blame others. In many cases, no politician wants to take responsibility for the status of the economy – the PUP blames the UDP and vice versa. Not only in politics, but also in general, Belizeans prefer to blame others when things go wrong than to attribute the

failure to themselves. Examples include a) in school, most parents blame teachers for their child’s failure instead of blaming themselves or the child, and b) in organizations, managers would blame their subordinates for failure instead of blaming themselves. In general, fingers are always pointed to anyone else apart from oneself to shoulder the blame.

There is one caveat to the low context nature of communication in Belize that revolves around time. The one characteristic as outlined by Hall that fits Belize in the high context culture is that time is not highly organized in Belize. The Belizean culture is one in which most activities held are not started on time; if an activity is scheduled to be started at 9:00am, it will start at 9:15am or sometimes 9:30 am; this is called ‘Belize time’ it seems now that this is accepted as a norm. Table 3 is a summary table representing Hall’s cultural factors for Belize including contextualized communication.

**Table 3**

*Hall’s Cultural Factors for Belize*

<b>Cultural Factors</b>	<b>Results</b>
<b>The Silent Language of...</b>	
Time	Variable, Polychronic
Space	Private, Low-density, Materialistic
Things	Personal status
Friendships	Temporal, Few long-lasting friendships with some obligations
Agreements	Written/explicit, Contracts more important than relationships
<b>Contextualized Communication</b>	Low context

## **Discussion, Comparative Management, & Managerial Implications**

Using the Delphi method, we have established a national baseline for the cultural dimensions of Belize utilizing Hofstede's and Hall's cultural dimensions, frameworks, and factors. The work of Hofstede and Hall more generally may now be used to compare Belize with its primary international business partners as a tool for navigating cultures. We selected the following national cultures/regions for comparison: 1) the Anglo-American cluster (e.g., the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Ireland); 2) Latin America (e.g., Mexico, Central America, and Venezuela); and 3) Asia (e.g., Taiwan<sup>6</sup>).

### ***Comparing the Anglo-American Cluster and Belize***

Comparing Hofstede's and Hall's rating for Belize, and the Anglo-American countries, it is evident that many of the cultural dimensions are similar with the exceptions of uncertainty avoidance and power distance. Also, Belizean culture is one where time is not highly organized and often polychronic in orientation. Despite these few differences, Belizeans may be at an advantage in negotiating business with businesspeople from such countries because of possessing more similarities than differences including a common language (English).

The high power distance in Belize signifies that the relation between boss and subordinate is strictly ruled and dependent on the decisions of the boss. Employees highly accept that their bosses have more power than them and that their decisions and opinions are right because of the higher status they possess. Belize's high rating of uncertainty avoidance explains that emotions are displayed in the way that everything different is dangerous; people are not open to change. Belizeans strongly resist change

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<sup>6</sup> Belize is one of a handful of countries that officially recognizes Taiwan over Mainland China in the United Nations.

and worry about the future. To prevent uncertainty, Belize set up laws and rules and a much higher demand for details is needed when creating a contract. This is to avoid any circumstances which could cause any kind of uncertainty.

The Anglo-Americans are more likely to encourage innovations and emphasize new ideas. However, when negotiating with Belizeans, there may be reluctance in accepting new innovations and ideas and details will have to be spelled out so that uncertainty is reduced. The objective of negotiators from the Anglo-American cluster as with Belizean negotiators is usually to arrive at legalistic contracts, and therefore a dominant concern is with getting the details right, and to use all relationships to facilitate the achievement of certainty (rather than ambiguity). Consequently, both parties may tend to minimize time spent in non-task related activities at the beginning of negotiations.

Communication for the Anglo-Americans is based on the premise that no matter how complex the content, it still needs to be communicated through succinct, explicit language. When Belizeans negotiate and communicate business with the Anglo-Americans then, they should ensure that “small talk” is quickly exhausted. Often, very little contextual information is shared by participants when it is time to meet. Rather, Belizean business professionals should provide concrete plans, details, and results and not having others “read between the lines” because with them, statements are interpreted literally.

As for Belizeans where time is not highly valued and organized, they need to bear in mind that when negotiating with the Anglo-American cluster, time is of utmost importance. These countries highly value time which is planned and scheduled out and should be adhered to in order to improve the chances of success with negotiations. Belizeans need to be mindful that Anglo-Americans existing in a monochronic culture get frustrated when working with people from polychronic cultures who view time as something fluid, and who easily alter schedules to shifting priorities such that meetings will start late,

outside issues may interrupt business transactions, multiple activities may be scheduled at the same time, and adherence to deadlines may depend on the strength of the relationship.

Problems in negotiations might be encountered when it comes to dealing with time. Time is very important for Belizeans to consider when making negotiations with Anglo-Americans. Whilst in Belize it is not precisely important to be on time for appointments or meetings – as a matter of fact it is the culture to not be on time. Delays in appointments are expected, tolerated or at least taken into account. In the U.K., U.S., Ireland or Canada, however, time has a high value and should be precisely organized to keep negotiations running. Any delay or disturbance in managing time may influence the entire negotiation.

Belizeans therefore have to pay keen attention to maintaining deadlines, attending meetings on time and providing information on a timely basis. This is because the U.S., U.K., Canadian and the Irish, being low context communicators (monochronic) deal with one explicit activity at a time and so working on their timing (schedule) is extremely important for negotiations to be successful. Therefore, when doing business negotiations, Belizeans should ensure that time is strictly adhered to. Just as with Belize, Anglo-Americans expect short-term rewards for their work instead of having long-term commitments.

Belize and the Anglo-American cluster generally have a private space orientation.

People prefer considerable space between themselves and the person they are talking to or doing business with. The distance varies from culture to culture; for example, in the U.K. it can sometimes be up to 30 inches. In Belize, people generally want to be given their space as well. Being all low context cultures, developing relationships and forming trust is not as important when making negotiations; rather, more emphasis is placed on forming contracts, getting negotiations started, and getting business underway.



### ***Comparing Latin America and Belize***

The Latin American culture is one of high context, these countries prefer to form relationships before they enter into agreements and make negotiations. When negotiations are in process, contracts tend to be shorter in length, less is expressed explicitly, and much is taken for granted based on the strength of personal bonds. Doing business with foreigners can be very confusing for Belizeans who operate in a primarily low context culture because they may not understand what is meant due to the unwritten rules of such cultural behavior. Latin American countries are very collectivistic which means that sometimes the decision-making process is long and tedious because people seek the approval of the (in-) group and organizational hierarchy (high power distance) before making the decision. Latin Americans share very specific and extensive information with their in-group members (good friends, families, close coworkers), whilst Belizeans prefer to limit communication to smaller, more select groups of people, sharing only that information which is necessary.

Both Latin Americans and Belizeans view time as a factor that is flexible and circular. They exist in polychronic cultures which may mean that they prefer to keep their time unstructured, changing from one activity to another as the mood takes them. In a Belizean office, it would not be strange to see the door opening and someone entering, phone ringing, and a meeting happening all at once. Although Latin Americans can meet deadlines, they need to do so in their own way. They prefer to not have detailed plans imposed upon them, nor do they want to make their own detailed plans. Latin Americans and Belizeans might not encounter many problems along this cultural dimension because in both cultures they prefer to work as they see fit without a strict schedule, following their internal mental processes from one minute to the next.

### *Comparing Asia and Belize*

Belizeans have more of a visible, external outward reaction to things. Belizeans may argue about each other's opinion within the decision-making process and take discussions in their own hands to come to an agreement, being very individualistic. Because of having a low context culture, Belizeans prefer to know clearly what is going on and have to be provided with detailed background information before doing business. Belizeans also tend to be precise and provide just the required information. Taiwanese people, on the other hand, tend to be reserved which is considered as active behavior in collectivistic cultures. They first need to build up an interpersonal relationship— a foundation where it is possible to find the right level of context.

Until they form a relationship, then, Taiwanese will prefer not to progress to negotiations. When negotiating, Taiwanese rely upon a lot of research data or in-depth background because being a culture of high uncertainty avoidance, the more information provided to them is better. Also, due to their high power distance ranking, decision making is done by position (authority/seniority). Consequently, when Belizeans negotiate with Asians, Belizeans should ensure that much patience is exercised in the process. Belizeans are more into getting the negotiation going while Taiwanese are more interested in forming a relationship first— a huge difference in cultures that is important to note so as not to give up.

Because of Belize having a low-context culture, Belizeans may view the communication style of Taiwanese as a waste of time. Taiwanese see words as tools not to persuade, but to build relationships whilst Belizeans see words as an important form of “getting ahead”. Belizeans when dealing with Taiwanese need to adjust their communication style ensuring that their culture of “straight up talking” does not send a rude and insensitive message to their Taiwanese donors.

Taiwanese are more long term oriented and make plans for many years as compared to Belizeans who seem to lack long term stability and strategic plans and seem to plan in the very short term. Time should not be a big concern when negotiating with Taiwanese. As both the Belizean and Taiwanese cultures are said to be polychronic and high context (at least at times for Belizeans especially on the issue of time), they do not emphasize promptness, tend to do many things at the same time, and are easily distracted. Focus is more on what will be done than when it should be done. Because Taiwan is a collectivist country, negotiations may take longer than expected because of consulting with others before decisions are made. Belizeans are more individualistic and would rather make decisions individually; hence, much patience must be exercised by Belizeans once again as they deal with Taiwanese.

Based on Hall's cultural factors, most differences in culture exist between Belize and Taiwan. Belizeans gear more towards personal status whilst Taiwanese focus on family status; forming relationships are more important in Taiwan than in Belize and thus the negotiating process might take longer than the Belizean would desire.

### ***Summary of Navigating Cultures: Belize and the World***

Belize's culture seems not to be radically different from the Anglo-American culture cluster, but other important countries and regions such as Asia (Taiwan) and Latin America are distinct (see Table 4). Based on Hofstede's cultural factors it can be said that the cultural environment for Belize, United States, Canada, the U.K and Ireland are all similar with few exceptions. The exceptions evolve with Belize's high uncertainty and power distance in contrast to the Anglo culture cluster. However, all the named countries have individualistic, short-term oriented and indulgent cultures in addition to having a more masculine dominated society (Hofstede Insights, 2021). Another major difference seen in the four Anglo-American countries compared to Belize is the issue of time. Whilst it is not a detrimental concern

for Latin Americans and Asians, it is very important for Belizeans to consider this issue when making negotiations with Anglo-Americans. As the saying goes “time is money”. And for all these countries that are monochronic, this is true. It is therefore of extreme importance that Belizeans take into consideration the language of time when dealing with the U.S., U.K., Canada or Ireland.

As for Taiwan, similarities exist in the high ratings of uncertainty avoidance and power distance. Differences exist because a collectivist culture exists in Taiwan, whilst in Belize people are more individualistic. Another difference is that Taiwan possesses a restrained culture (Hofstede Insights, 2021), while Belizeans possess an indulgent culture. Taiwanese value duty over pleasure and they work hard, even forgoing their needs to meet the call of duty.

This explains the reason why the Asian societies are developing at a fast pace. As an example in Belize, the Chinese and Taiwanese supermarkets have dominated this industry and are very successful because the Asians work together (collectivistic culture) and are very hard working (restraint culture), though living in Belize; when Belizeans are partying and having fun, the Asians are hard at work. Chinese in Belize are focused on their goals and achievements, and they adapt to their group’s societal norms rather than seeking personal gratification. They therefore have a disciplined work habit and are serious about getting tasks accomplished, which are important for Belizeans to take into consideration if they are to successfully conduct business and maintain favorable relationships with Asians such as the Taiwanese. Lastly, Belizeans are more short term oriented whilst Taiwanese are more long term oriented (Hofstede Insights, 2021). This implies that Taiwanese values long term relationships and prefers on setting long term goals for the benefit of the parties involved. They are also thrifty, ensuring that resources are used wisely, which Belizeans would need to adapt to, if successful negotiations and business are to materialize. Both Belize and Taiwan have societies that are still somewhat dominated by males although this situation

is rapidly changing in Belize. In general, based on Hofstede's dimensions, most differences in culture exist between Belize and Taiwan.

As with Taiwan, a primary difference seen among Belize and the Latin American region is in the language of agreements, for Belize does not place much value on forming relationship before business is done as much as these other two counterparts (Taiwan and Latin America). Also, the issue of collectivism for these countries allows them to have a longer decision making process which is not reflective of Belize's culture due to its individualistic nature.

A perfect similarity that exists between Belize and Latin America, one that Belizeans can use to their advantage, is the issue of time. Both for Belize and Latin America, time is not seen as something rigid but rather flexible. Individuals base decisions on themselves rather than as a group which is the reverse case for Latin Americans.

Based on the analysis provided, Belizeans must recognize valuable similarities so that opportunities are seized and likewise be aware of differences to make necessary adjustments so that success in forming and/or maintaining relationships and creating negotiations may be enduring.

Belize being a low context culture has to pay special attention to the way relationships are built and negotiations and business is conducted with others of high context cultures such as Taiwan and Latin America. In general, however, the Belizean culture does not have a primary but rather a secondary impact on forming relationships between Belize and other countries. This aspect of culture must not be lost sight of however, as it can tarnish the process of successful negotiations for Belizean firms.

**Table 4**

*Summary Cross-Cultural Comparison of Hofstede and Hall*

Cultural Dimension	Belize	Anglo-American Cluster	Latin America	Asia (Taiwan)
<b>Geert Hofstede</b>				
Power Distance	High	Low	High	High
Collectivism/Individualism	Individualist	Individualist	Collectivist	Collectivist
Femininity/Masculinity	Feminine/ Masculine	Masculine	Masculine	Masculine
Uncertainty Avoidance	High	Low	High	High
Time Orientation	Short Term	Short Term	Short Term	Long Term
Indulgence/Restraint	Indulgent	Indulgent	Indulgent	Restrained

Cultural Dimension	Belize	Anglo-American Cluster	Latin America	Asia (Taiwan)
<b>Edward Hall</b>				
Language of Time	-	-	-	-
Language of Space	Private, low-density, materialistic	Private, low-density, materialistic	Public, high-density	Public, high-density
Language of Things	Variable, polychronic	Planned/Scheduled, monochronic	Variable, polychronic	Variable, polychronic
Language of Friendships	Temporal, A few long- lasting friendships with some obligations	Temporal, casual, few obligations	A few long- lasting friendships with many obligations	A few long- lasting friendships with many obligations
Language of Agreements	Contracts more important than relationships	Contracts more important than relationships	Relationships more important than contracts	Relationships more important than contracts
Contextualized Communication	Low	Low	High	High

## CONCLUSION

In this article we have sought to classify Belize with regards to the cultural dimensions offered by Hofstede and Hall. Understanding and navigating these cultural dimensions is critical to successful international business interactions. Utilizing two in-country Delphi studies employing Belizean experts of culture, we have benchmarked Belizean culture for comparative purposes within the global business arena. We do not suggest that there is a “best” culture; on the contrary, we offer insights that permit Belizeans and foreigners opportunity to better understand one another—that is, to navigate amongst and between cultures—as they interact frequently on the global business stage.

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