

## A Different Perspective on the Recession

The way people from the different countries react to these days of great uncertainty and economic recession can give clues to cultural differences. I have been noticing how the current global recession is perceived in Mexico and in the US.

In the U.S. we are trained to prepare to face hard times. The media teaches us to fear they we will lose their jobs. This make us think about sending out our resumes. We have come to expect and demand that the government do something immediately to bail us out of the recession. And we expect the government make the war on terrorism go away. So, we get upset when, despite our best personal efforts, we realize that our destiny may not be completely within our control. This realization makes us frustrated.



My Mexican friends and colleagues are, I think, reacting very differently. They are more inclined to see the recession as something totally out of their hands. They don't think there is very much that they can do. If the United States is in a recession, Mexico will be too - because of their economic dependence on our financial health. They feel that the only thing they can do is to wait for things to get better in the United States and then work and hope for better times in Mexico.

In the meantime, they are in the hands of "destiny" and forces beyond their control. If a job loss occurs, they will deal with it with the help of family members and their extended social networks. Mexicans seem to be much less personally frustrated and angry although they are certainly as worried as Americans. However, I sense that they know that "this too shall pass" and they do not choose to waste emotional energy on something that they perceive to be beyond their control. They will be more careful how they spend their money - but they will still go ahead and enjoy their family vacations. In cross-cultural parlance, we refer to this approach as "fatalism".

Fatalism is not always such a bad trait. Maybe, in these difficult times, we can learn something from our friends whose cultures are more fatalistic - they can give us a different, maybe more useful perspective, and a way of maintaining our peace of mind as we deal with difficult times.