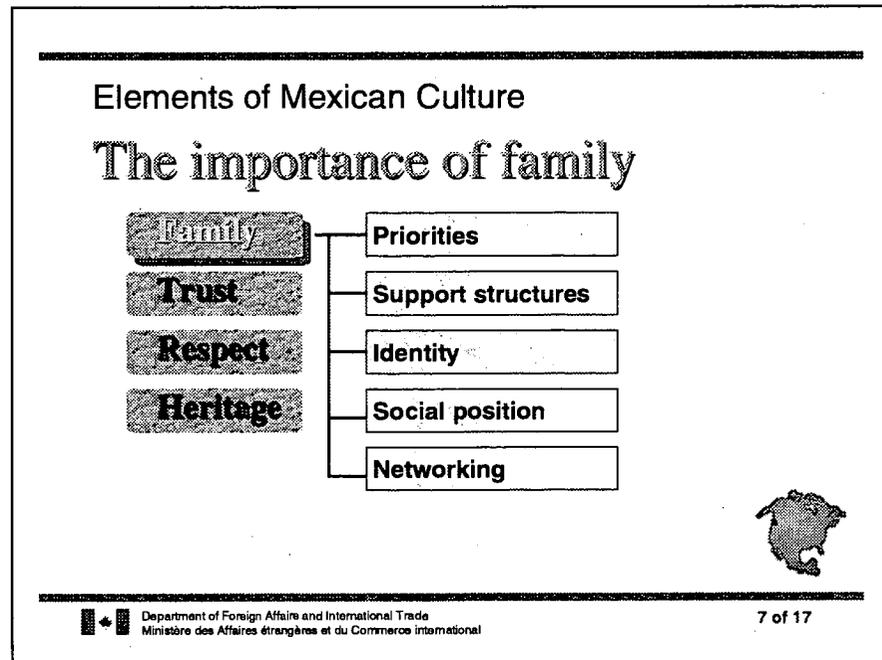


The Family



The family is the single most important entity in Mexican life. It is central to the individual's identity as well as his or her own attitudes and behaviour. The family commands a Mexican's highest level of priority.

Priorities

Family activities and obligations usually take precedence over business or personal matters. This does not mean that business is unimportant. But business success plays less of a defining role in Mexican society than it does in many Western or Asian cultures. Mexicans tend to see people who give too much priority to business as lacking perspective. Mexicans may admire such outwardly focussed people because of their success, but they are unlikely to identify with them or truly trust them.

Canadian executives doing business in Mexico should be prepared to accept absences and missed appointments for family reasons. This may be a practical as well as a cultural issue. Mexico does not have advanced social programs. The burden for care of children, the sick and the elderly falls almost entirely upon the family unit.

A misunderstanding of family priority is one of the reasons that foreigners have a negative perception of the Mexican work ethic. Mexicans like to work and to learn. But they generally adopt an attitude of "work to live" not "live to work". This attitude is less pronounced in the northern part of Mexico, where American influences have taken hold.