SYLLABUS
CROSS-CULTURAL MANAGEMENT
MBAM 661.11
FALL 2003 - Session B

Monday/ 1:00 – 5:00 pm
GSBM Malibu

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INTRODUCTION
The purpose of this course is to raise awareness of issues associated with cross-cultural management. The course material will be useful in facilitating the student’s development as a global manager and to enlighten understanding of cross-cultural issues. The content of the seminar is drawn from cultural issues identified in film, readings from text and practitioner journals, and classroom discussion. Experiential exercises will be used to reinforce learning.

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course is designed specifically for the MIB student. Emphasis is placed on learning how to “learn culture” using methods for scanning the cultural assumptions of groups; bringing personally held cultural assumptions to consciousness; gaining exposure to the cultures of a variety of different regions, nations, and groups and considering their organizational and managerial implications; and facilitating communication and cooperation across cultures. Personal and managerial skills, particularly related to the promotion of a cross-cultural mindset, are developed to enhance performance in multicultural environments and in international assignments.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
The three primary objectives of the course include:

- Development of skills that are necessary to be an effective cross-cultural manager. In particular, the value of a cross-culture mindset will be highlighted.
- The understanding and application of the Integrated Cultural Framework (ICF). The ICF provides a useful model for the measurement of culture and, therefore, allows one to move from culture to culture recognizing the crucial elements of each culture.
- Enhance personal development by raising awareness and sensitivity to cultural differences. Students have the opportunity to assess the degree to which their behavior is appropriate for cross-cultural management positions.

The course is highly interactive and requires students to take an active, participatory role. Rather than use of power point the instructor will distribute handouts that capture relevant cross-cultural frameworks. Because of the engaging nature of the course students are asked not to open laptops during class sessions.
COURSE MATERIALS
Readings Packet: Online Journal (available at the bookstore)

GRADING
Country Culture Project (Nov. 19 & 26)         40 (Appendix A)
Final Project (December 3)                              30 (Appendix B)
Culture Study-Team Project (October 29)       10 (Course Outline)
Individual Paper (November 5)                       10 (Course Outline)
Executive Interview (December 3)                  10 (Appendix C)
Total                           100 points (plus <minus> peer evaluation
points—see below)

Class participation is encouraged, and in the case where the student is within one point of a
higher grade, the instructor will consider the quality of participation in the determination of the
final grade.

Grade Distribution (point total)
94 and above    A
90-92        A-
87-89     B+
82-86       B
78-81     C+
72-77        C

Peer Evaluation
Each team will design its own peer evaluation, or performance appraisal system.
The purpose of peer evaluation is to establish a system that creates incentives for team
members to prepare and participate in the group project. In other words, peer evaluation
reinforces the likelihood that you (and your colleagues) will carry your (their) fair share of the
work load. Each individual will rate all of the other members of their group at the last session.
Individual's peer evaluation scores will be the average of the points they receive from other
members of their group.

Procedures for peer evaluation:

1) assume the peer evaluation is worth 10 points and there are five students in a group
2) each individual must assign a total of 40 points to the other four members of their
group

Students who average a ten on the evaluation will maintain their cumulative point total.
However, students who average under (or over) ten will have points subtracted (or added) to
their final total. The final average is multiplied by a factor of three (3) to assess the peer
evaluation grade.

For example, suppose Bill, Susan and Angela are three individuals in a 5-member team. At the
end of the semester their peer evaluation average totals, 9.3, 10.0 and 11.3, respectively. Points
for peer evaluation would be assigned as follows:

Bill,            -2 (i.e., 9.3- 10 = -.7 x 3)
Susan,             0
Angela,       +4 (i.e., 11.3- 10= +1.3 x 3)

Again, these points are added to or subtracted from the total points accumulated for the semester
to determine a final grade.
**Attendance Policy**

The success of the course is dependent on student preparation and participation; therefore, attendance is essential for individual and team success. You are expected to attend all sessions. Those missing a session will be asked to prepare a 5 page paper discussing the topic that was assigned on the date of the absence (the instructor will specify the structure of the paper). Failure to hand in a paper results in a 10-point penalty.

Being on time for class is important. The expectation is that you will be present (both physically and cognitively) at 1:00 p.m. and remain in class until the conclusion of the session. Be prepared-- on occasion parking can be a challenge. Please leave sufficient time for such an event.

**Conduct and Policy on Disabilities**

GSBM students are expected to respect personal honor and the rights and property of others at all times. The University rules on conduct can be found in the GSBM Catalog. Additionally, students with disabilities are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the University’s Policies on Disabilities in the GSBM Catalog or contact the University’s equal opportunity office at (310) 506-4208.

**Course Outline**

*October 20 (Session #1)*
Course Introduction
Cultural Coat of Arms
Integrated Cultural Framework (ICF)
Team Formation
   Readings: Adler, Chapters 1 & 2; “Film as a Lens for Studying Culture and its Implications for Management” (the article follows the Appendices in the syllabus)

*October 27 (Session #2)*
Cultural Complexity
Globalization
U.S. Culture—in and out of the workplace
Selection of Management Topic for Country Culture Presentation
   Readings: Adler, Chapter 3; “Body Ritual of the Nacirema”; “Beyond Sophisticated Stereotypes...”; “In Search of a Truly American Film”; “Brave new McWorld: Creative Destruction...”; “Pitching U.S. to Others a Tough Sell...”

**Assignment:** Team project. View the film “Gung Ho,” write a 2-3-page paper applying the seven-dimensions of the ICF as it relates to scenes from the video. Although somewhat stereotypical, the film does provide the opportunity for students to employ the ICF. Your paper should include both Japanese and American cultures. Identify specific scenes in the film that support your conclusions. Do not “force” answers. Paradox and ambiguity are much apart of cultural complexity. If disagreement between team members occurs describe the multiple interpretations of the scene that led to the difference in identifying an ICF dimension. After completing the ICF analysis select three or four underlying values that appear to “drive” each culture. The purpose of the assignment is to strengthen your ability to use the framework.
November 3  (Session #3)
Cross-Cultural Mindset (CCM)
The Challenges of the Expatriate—case analysis  

ASSIGNMENT: Individual paper, 1-page, single space. Adler (Cultural Synergy Model) and Rhinesmith (Global Mindset Model) describe the complexity and nuances associated with cross-cultural understanding. Argyris (“Teaching Smart People How to Learn”) states the challenge associated with recognizing responsibility. Incorporate their frameworks in offering recommendations to Wal-Mart and Marriott regarding the globalization strategy that is discussed in the articles. BE SPECIFIC rather than general. Identify examples as you address the application of the Adler/Rhinesmith models.

November 10  (Session #4)
Applying a CCM—case analysis
The Challenges of Diversity  
Readings: “Managing Cultural Diversity; Implications for Organizational Competitiveness”; “Does Tolerance Lead to Better Partnering?”

November 17 & 24  (Sessions #5 & 6)
Presentations (see Appendix A)

December 1  (Session #7)
Individual Final Project (see Appendix B)
Executive Interview (see Appendix C)
ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY AT THE LAST SESSION
Appendix A
Team Presentation
Country Culture Project

The purpose of the assignment is to examine cultural complexity in a non-English speaking country. Specifically, the team presentation will apply the ICF to describe country culture, discuss paradox and ambiguity related to the culture, and identify the influence of culture on management practice (each team will select a management topic at the second class session). Because of both conscious and unconscious biases, I strongly encourage teams not to select a country that is the origin of a teammate.

The presentation (60-75 minutes) should address the following issues:
- Historical underpinnings of the culture
- Application of the ICF
- Discussion of paradox and ambiguity associated with the culture
- Presentation of the values and basic assumptions that drive the culture
- Influence of culture on management practice
  - Each team will discuss the implications of culture on one management topic. The Adler text is your initial resource.
    - Topics include: motivation/reward systems (pages 174-182), leadership (pages 165-174), managing teams (pages 133-163), negotiation (pages 208-256), and decision-making (pages 182-195), ethical practice (pages 189-196)
  - Apply your analysis as it relates to the issues identified in the article, “Can Wal-Mart Get Any Bigger?” located in your readings packet.
- Cross-cultural mindset implications
  - Integration of history, ICF and management practice

In addition to the usual sources of information (e.g., the Internet, books, articles, a visit to the consulate), you may also wish to broaden your knowledge base in other ways. A visit to a cultural event, reading a novel, or viewing a film about your selected country could expand your understanding of culture and history and offer additional insights. In addition, you may want to contact companies who conduct business in the project country. Although chapters 5-7 of the Adler text identifies management practice issues, be sure to review chapters 1-4 to enhance cross-cultural understanding.

Assume your group is a training team responsible for preparing class members for an overseas assignment as store manager at Wal-Mart. Imagine that your colleagues are being sent to the project country. Your responsibility is to prepare them for a role as a manager in the overseas store.

Project Guidelines
Create an interesting presentation by encouraging participation from the audience through role-plays, experiential activities, case analysis, or other means of promoting interaction. Involvement of class members will strengthen interest and help clarify cultural issues, however, be careful not to allow the experiential exercise to focus more on entertainment than content. The exercises should reinforce key learning points. Prepare a 1 to 2-page executive summary to distribute to the class. The summary should include a reference page that identifies the information sources of your presentation. A process note: I strongly urge you to work as a team rather than preparing the presentation independently.

Grading
The assessment will be based on:
Clarity of historical underpinnings, coverage of ICF, application to management practice, integration of history, ICF and practice, the extent to which the class is involved, and degree to which the presentation was high energy, interesting and stimulating.

Although the professor will determine the grade, members of the class will be asked to complete a feedback form for each presentation. The feedback will be mailed to teams during the week following the last session.
Appendix B
Individual Final Project

The purpose of the assignment is to reinforce your understanding of the cross-cultural issues identified in the course, and to have you carry out a self-assessment regarding your attributes for an international assignment. The paper should be double-spaced, 6-10 pages in length.

Cross-Cultural Issues
Select a management topic not chosen by your team. Each member of the team should choose a different topic. Using the country your group identified for its presentation, complete the following analysis:

• **Briefly**, describe the country culture using the ICF along with a discussion of paradox and ambiguity.
• If you were a U.S. manager in a Wal-Mart store in that country how would you plan and implement a strategy specific to the management topic you have selected for analysis?
  o Refer to the Adler text as well as other resources and prepare a reference page citing the source of your information.
  o Integrate the ICF in your strategy.
  o Using the Rhinesmith Cross-Cultural Mindset (CCM) model discuss the ways in which your strategy encourages a CCM.

Self-Assessment
Refer to Chapter 8 & 10 of the Adler text. Complete the questionnaire on pages 341-345. In addition, review the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Index (CCAI) and Bennett’s model for Cultural Competence. Using double loop thinking respond to the following items:

• To what extent are you an appropriate candidate for an international assignment?
• To what extent are you a “fit” in the country you are investigating?
• What are your strengths? Your areas of needed improvement? (use the CCAI and Bennett’s model to frame your response. DO NOT GLOSS OVER DEVELOPMENTAL CONCERNS)
• **Provide specifics rather than general statements regarding fit, strengths, and areas of needed improvement.**
• Other than language proficiency, what would you need to do to enhance your likelihood of being successful in an international assignment:
Appendix C
Guidelines for the Executive Interview*

The executive interview assignment requires that you organize your time, think through your objectives and plan a strategy for accomplishing each step. The interview is an opportunity for the building of a professional approach to your career.

The objectives of the interview are:
1. To begin building a network of business leaders in a variety of industries
2. To experience first hand that it is not difficult for you to gain interviews with senior executives
3. To build skills and confidence in conversing with senior level executives
4. To practice the cross-cultural mindset you have been exposed to in the course.
5. To begin the process early on of building contacts who may be able to help you in landing a job upon graduation

It is imperative that you at no time ask for or hint at getting a job or internship with the executive or his/her company. Your stated objective is to learn more about the industry and insights of a senior executive. That is what should be communicated to everyone whom you talk with about the assignment. Frequently the by-product of a successful interview is subtle and unspoken.

The guidelines below are designed to prepare you for the job search activity, which the Career Development Center expects you to initiate. The best way to make that task less awesome is to follow these steps.

1. Do not begin with an executive you know (You can do that at the end of the MBA program)

2. Pick an industry, company, functional area or position within a company that you want to learn about. Select your interview with an executive from the country where you will be going in the second year of the program.

3. Do some background research. This should include library research (i.e., in the Computer Lab use the Dow Jones News Retrieval Service, Compustat (for Standard and Poors data); in the library use the Directory of Merchants and Manufacturers, Moody’s, etc. Ask the staff of the Career Development Center for other resources, however, they will not be able to provide you with names and phone numbers. Your background research should also include requests for material from the company, or an industry association or trade group. (Phone the company and ask for a copy of the annual report or other publicly available material.) Select a company and a position within the company (i.e., Controller, VP of Marketing, etc.) with whom you wish to contact.

4. Study the information you have gathered in order to be informed about the company’s history, present circumstances, products, services, etc. Read trade journals and other news items that may provide additional information.

5. Phone the company and ask the receptionist/operator for the correct spelling of the name of the person you intend to interview, i.e., “the vice-president of Finance” and of his/her secretary’s name.
6. Think through your statement, what you are going to say to the secretary and the executive when you contact them on the phone. (Remember, you are a Pepperdine MBA student working on a class assignment and you are asking for, perhaps, twenty minutes of the executive’s time). Often interviews stretch out to an hour or more, but that is the executive’s choice and you need not tell that to the secretary.

7. Make the calls. You may have to phone three or four companies before getting your first appointment. Always be patient, courteous, and gently persistent (i.e., assertive, yet cooperative). Do not cause the other person to feel pressure. Remember that one of the reasons you chose Pepperdine was so that you could acquire more professional polish, poise and graciousness. If the secretary gives you a rough time, as sometimes happens, let this become the perfect opportunity to practice being graciously competent. One way to learn to be a gracious winner while dealing with adversity and difficult people is to deal with adversity and difficult people.

**Preparing for the Interview**

1. Gain a face-to-face interview with someone who meets the criteria listed under “Criteria for Selecting the Executives”

2. Be dressed appropriately for interviewing a senior executive. Suit and tie for men, women should wear a suitable business dress or suit, or skirt and jacket, and minimal jewelry.

3. Focus on the skills for establishing rapport. The communication techniques discussed in class are valuable tools to use.

4. If you meet the secretary who assisted you on the phone, be sure to thank him or her.

5. When you first meet the executive, thank him/her for taking the time to assist you with this assignment.

6. If you choose to take notes during the interview be sure to minimize the time you spend writing, it is more effective to maintain eye contact and be “present” while engaging the executive.

7. Explain again that this is a class assignment and then proceed. Be aware of his/her pacing of the interview. The executive may decide to spend more than twenty minutes with you. Some interviews may continue long past the initial agreed upon time-- recognize the body language of the executive and be responsive to his/her agenda. It is important that you encourage the executive to talk as much as he/she is comfortable. You should ask open-ended questions which will encourage more in-depth answers.

8. You may want to ask the following questions as part of your interview
   a) “What are the differences in managing in a host country rather than the home country”
   b) “What is your definition of a cross-cultural mindset?”
   c) “What are the skills necessary to attain a cross-cultural mindset?”
   d) “How would you describe your leadership style?”
   e) “What do you think are the most important skills an entry level MBA needs to possess in order to advance in your organization/industry?”
f) “What would you recommend as the best background experience if I were to aspire to a position like yours in this industry?”

9. Obtain two of the executive’s cards, one of which is stapled to your report that other is for you to keep

10. Remember to thank the executive for the time he/she was able to meet with you.

11. Immediately upon leaving the interview, take the time to write your reactions, recollections and overall impression of the experience, (You may forget some of the meaningful dialogue, if you wait until the next day to capture the event).

13. As soon as possible write a thank you note to the executive, and attach a copy to your report.

14. Call your second interview candidate.

Criteria for Selecting an Executive
1. Do not select an executive you personally know.
2. The company or division should have over $50 million in annual sales
3. For companies under $50 million in annual sales, the president is preferred
4. For companies whose annual sales are between $50 - 300 million, a vice-president is acceptable
5. For organizations with sales over $300 million a director or manager who reports directly to an executive VP or senior VP is acceptable.

Your 1-page, single spaced report should include:
1. The executive’s name, position, company name and the date of the interview (attach a business card to the assignment), also include the name of the secretary and a copy of the thank you note sent to the executive.
2. A BRIEF description of the primary business of the company. (one sentence)
3. The primary responsibilities of the executive. (1 sentence)
4. What did you learn from the interview? (this item should be the emphasis of your report). In writing your response consider the answers to some of the questions you asked of the executive. Be sure to address the value added of this interview with respect to developing a cross-cultural mindset.
5. Given the information you have received, what insights have you gained regarding actions you need to take to enhance career opportunities?

* adapted from the work of Wayne Strom, Pepperdine University
Film As A Lens For Studying Culture And Its Implications For Management

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Film as a Lens for Studying Culture and its Implications for Management

Organizational culture is influenced by the values and origins of its leaders. For example, the national culture of the founders is likely to impact organizational design and structure. An organization’s reward system, its performance appraisal process, and its communication systems are, to some extent, an extension of the national culture of the corporate headquarters. The relationship between culture and organizational dynamics is clearly an important issue in the study of management (Adler, 1997). The purpose of this research is to examine, over time, the impact of culture on management practice.

In reviewing the literature, culture has multiple definitions. Schein (1992) describes the culture of a group as:

A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (p. 12)

Hofstede (1980) refers to culture as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another.” Hall and Hall (1990) examine culture as communication. Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) describe culture as a shared, commonly held body of general beliefs and values that define the expectations of a group. In general, the common theme that seems to emerge is that culture is distinctive, it is shared by a group, it influences behavior and values, and it is passed on to new members. Additionally, when two cultures encounter one another their differences can create anxiety, tension, and, sometimes, conflict. Although the definition of culture is important in understanding meaning, the measurement of culture provides the mechanism that allows for a comparison of cultures and, therefore, creates a framework to help understand differences between cultures. This understanding, in turn, can help predict behaviors and serve as a guide for managing these differences and their effects.
The Measurement of Culture

There are a number of frameworks that are useful in recognizing differences across cultures (Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, 1961; Hofstede, 1980; Hall & Hall, 1990; Schein, 1992). Anthropologists Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961), identified a set of common themes that societies/cultures have faced over time. Six issues or problems that cultures deal with include: relationship of humans to nature, time orientation, beliefs about basic human nature, activity orientation, relationships among people and orientation to space.

Relationship of humans to nature. This dimension refers to the extent to which people within the culture orient themselves to the external environment. Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck describe orientation to nature in three categories. One, “subjugation” to nature refers to those who see themselves at the mercy of physical forces. They believe that life is predetermined and therefore, they should not attempt to alter or change conditions. Second, those who are in “harmony” with nature believe it is their responsibility to coexist with nature. Change is seen as acceptable as long as it addresses the needs of the environment. Finally, “mastery” over nature is a characteristic of societies that believe they can control nature; change is admired and encouraged.

Actions that emphasize an altering of the environment to fulfill organizational objectives demonstrate mastery. Expansion of facilities, entry into new markets, and globalization of the enterprise are examples of mastery. Harmony or subjugation is exemplified by organization policy that is sensitive to the environment by considering the impact that development may have on the physical or cultural environment.

Time orientation. The extent to which a culture focuses on past, present or future is defined as time orientation. The more a society is based in the here and now, the greater the attention is to the “present”. Cultures are “past” oriented if its members relate to historical events as finding meaning in the explanation of daily life or look to the past in offering rules and guidelines for
standardizing behavior. Those societies that focus on planning for the future or consider possible future events that may influence current behavior are described as “future” oriented.

Focus on five and ten-year organization goals express a future orientation, while an emphasis on this year’s bottom line and quarterly reports demonstrate a present orientation. Companies that do both exhibit a mixed perspective, whereas, organizations that hold to the values of past leaders as a guide to policy while paying little or no attention to current or future concerns would be categorized as past oriented.

Belief about human nature. This dimension refers to one’s belief about the inherent nature of the human species--that is, the degree to which one sees others as good or evil or a mixture of both, along with beliefs about human species’ ability to change. The more a society accepts the mutability of others, the more likely the members of that society acknowledge one’s ability to change. Along the same lines, the more a culture describes the core values of others favorably, the more likely they define society as “good”. Societies that believe human nature cannot be trusted are more likely to view underlying motives to be “evil.” Cultures that acknowledge both good and evil in humans are described as “neutral or mixed.”

Organizations whose culture reflects a neutral or mixed perspective may be more inclined to accept mutability of the individual and, therefore, support training and development as a means of improving performance and providing career opportunities for its members. They also are more likely to base performance evaluation, rewards, and career advancement on competence rather than social class, connections, or education. Companies that view human nature as only good or bad may be less inclined to embrace change because, in either case, the individual is acknowledged as stable and not alterable. An organization whose assumption is that people are inherently evil would be less likely to commit to an extensive training program. Organizations that perceive goodness in all (or most) may be inclined to believe that employees will perform to their fullest capabilities without need for controls. Goodness implies individuals will remain committed to the organization’s mission because they are virtuous.
Activity orientation. A society whose members strive to achieve and attain success are identified as possessing a “doing” orientation, whereas members of cultures who are spontaneous, reacting more to feelings than established objectives would be categorized as “being.” A third activity dimension is “controlling.” In this case, people restrain their desires by detaching themselves from objects--the senses are moderated by thought and rationale.

A doing organization culture would likely emphasize goal accomplishment as a necessary means for achieving rewards as demonstrated in a pay-for-performance system. In a being culture, employees would be expected to work only as much as needed to take care of their needs for security and, perhaps, affiliation.

Relationships among people. This dimension concerns the sense of responsibility one has for others. Cultures that focus on self and family hold regard for “individualism.” The motivation is to accomplish goals for one’s (or one’s family) own benefit without particular concern for the benefit of others. A “group” orientation refers to societies who hold a high regard for those outside the family, that is, those who make up the group of which one is a part. Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck describe the third element of the relationships-among-people dimension as “hierarchical.” In this case, not only is the culture group-oriented, but it recognizes a hierarchy within the society that places greater status or position on some groups over others. Therefore, in this kind of culture mobility between groups is highly unlikely.

Individual cultures are inclined to reward individual performance, encourage individual decisions and acknowledge performance, even when part of a team, as intrinsic to the individual. Collectivist organizations support group decision making, reward teams and express a utilitarian viewpoint. Therefore, even though differences in individual performance emerge, a collectivist organization would reward all team members equally, and the group members would expect and prefer a reward system that does not differentiate individual performance.

Orientation to space. The extent to which members of a culture perceive their surrounding space refers to orientation to space. A “private” perspective means that the society considers space as sole ownership. Individuals have rights to exclusivity of space. A “public” orientation describes
societies who are comfortable sharing space; members of the culture are not inclined to feel a need to defend their territory. A “mixed” perspective identifies those cultures that express a combination of both private and public as witnessed by a formal office with a closed door, but once inside the office the arrangement of the furniture is less formal and invites those who enter to sit in close proximity to one another. Decisions made behind closed doors versus corporate settings where access to and visibility of decision-makers is available differentiate private from public corporate cultures.

Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck offer a framework that allows a systematic method of studying culture and comparisons between cultures. Naturally, within most societies subcultures emerge that look somewhat different from the dominant culture. It is necessary to recognize differences within societies, for to apply the cultural framework “across the board, “ clearly has harmful implications.

Hofstede (1980) presents an alternative set of cultural frameworks that describes national culture. His research resulted in the development of four dimensions-- power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism/collectivism and masculinity.

Power distance. The extent to which a society accepts the fact that power is distributed equally is a measure of power distance. The more a culture honors the belief that power and authority is held by only certain individuals or groups, the greater is the power distance. The counter belief, that is, that power should be distributed equally, represents a low power distance culture. In high power distance countries titles, rank and status carry a great deal of weight and those who hold power are accepted as authorities.

Organizations that are committed to decentralization and participative decision making demonstrate low power distance, while companies who prefer to maintain control at the top will generally have senior level executives making important decisions.

Uncertainty avoidance. Although uncertainty is part of life, societies that are more comfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity are more inclined to assume risk. These cultures are defined as
holding low uncertainty avoidance, while societies that are uncomfortable with uncertainty, and therefore strive to reduce risk are described as high uncertainty avoidance cultures.

Organizations that have little tolerance for deviant ideas and behaviors may respond to concerns about uncertainty by constructing a number of formal rules and regulations to reduce the risk of unanticipated behavior. Risk taking and less reliance on formal standard operating procedures identify corporate cultures that express low uncertainty avoidance.

**Individualism/Collectivism.** Similar to the Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) framework, individualism in Hostedian terms describes members of a society as concerned with their own interests. Collectivism, therefore, refers to cultures that consider the group as the source of nurturance as well as the recipient of benefits/rewards that are attained.

**Masculinity.** Perhaps the most controversial of the Hofstede dimensions, masculinity refers to the extent to which a culture emphasizes “male” values such as aggression and material gain. Societies that value quality of life and caring for others are described as feminine. Although, Hofstede does not specifically identify the role of women in defining masculinity, recent work (Dickson and House, 1998) suggests that gender egalitarianism does play a significant part in the dimension. Cultures that deny access for women in positions of authority within an organization fall under the masculine descriptor.

Therefore, a masculine agenda exists in organizations where there is little opportunity for women in decision-making roles and/or where attention is focused on office size or location (i.e., the corner window office). Corporate cultures that support offering time off work for single parents or provide day care at the company work site demonstrate feminine characteristics.

Although the Hofstede model anchors the dimensions in a dichotomous fashion, the framework is applied along a continuum. For example, countries can be described as low, moderate (or low to moderate), or high (or moderate to high). Perhaps, the primary value of the Hofstede framework is that it allows for comparisons between countries that can be useful in understanding differences across cultures.
Integrating the Frameworks

One of the difficulties in introducing culture to students is its multiple dimensions, its complexity, and its tacit nature. Although not directly supported by empirical research, an integration of the two models may offer a means of analyzing cultural differences without having to struggle with ten variables, while at the same time taking advantage of the work of both frameworks. Phillips and Boyacigiller (1998) have designed an integrated set of cultural frameworks that suggests that such an approach has value in creating a systematic method of integrating studies from similar domains. The authors of the current work present a synthesis of the Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck and Hofstede models (Table 1). Integrating the frameworks using the dimensions described below reduce the categories of analysis from ten to six.

**Ability of Influence.** Both power distance (Hofstede) and relationship to the environment (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck) can be represented by a perception of one’s ability to influence outcomes. Low (high) power distance suggests that one perceives he/she can (does not) have an input in the decision process, while a dominant (subjugation) view of the environment implies that one is able (unable) to impact the environment.

**Comfort with Ambiguity.** Low (high) levels of uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede) intimate a comfort (discomfort) with ambiguity and risk taking. Cultures that perceive human nature (Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck) as neutral (bad or good) are more inclined to feel comfortable (uncomfortable) with ambiguity and less compelled (more compelled) to rely on formal and/or informal rules to structure behavior.

**Assertiveness.** Both the masculinity scale (Hofstede) and the activity orientation (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck) refer to the extent to which a culture strives to achieve (“doing” and masculine) or chooses to act out feelings as they are experienced (“being” and feminine).

**Individualism/Collectivism.** Hofstede and Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck use similar terms when describing the degree to which members of a culture focus on personal gain versus acting in the best interest of the group.
Time orientation. There does not appear to be a compelling integration between Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck and the work of Hofstede regarding value of time. Therefore, time orientation stands alone.

Orientation to space. The Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck dimension associated with space does not seem to directly relate to any of the Hofstede dimensions.

The purpose of this study is to use the integrated framework as a means of examining cultural comparisons. Applying the six dimensions may be helpful in understanding differences across cultures.

Insert Table 1 Here

Evolution of Culture

In general, the assumption is that culture remains stable over time (Osland, 1998). The values that are derived from the history of a society are likely to be so embedded that culture is prone to remain constant. However, culture change is possible. Schein (1992), although describing organization culture, makes a convincing case for the evolution of culture. His premise is that if a system experiences enough disequalibrium it is forced to engage in a coping process that creates shifts in the mindsets of those who comprise the system (society). Changes in the way members of a society make sense of their “world” may, indeed, impact the assumptions of the culture in such a way as to alter values. For example, cultures that are faced with a significant change in their economic and/or political system (such as the former Soviet Union) may begin to question some of the assumptions that lead to the creation of the values and expectations of its society.
Schein (1992) suggests three elements are needed for culture change. First, the society must be confronted with discomforting data that leads to questioning of the current mindsets. Secondly, the challenge to the accepted ways of believing and acting results in some level of anxiety or guilt that requires a response. Finally, the culture must feel safe (although a feeling of safety may require an extended period of time) when confronted with information that suggests that the prior way of behaving is no longer applicable rather than defensively denying it.

Examining U.S. culture may be useful in considering Schein’s theory. Perhaps, the civil rights movement and the questioning of women’s role in the workplace are examples of the conditions Schein is describing. The discomforting data stating that women were less likely than men to be hired in positions of responsibility created controversy. Certainly, the data lead to feelings of anxiety (and perhaps guilt). But, it was not until the society began to feel safe, that is, identity and integrity of the culture was not threatened, that changes began to occur. (One could argue that acceptance of women in senior managerial positions, that is, positions of both responsibility and authority is still an issue. However, as indicated in Schein’s concept, the degree to which the culture feels safe with issues may take extensive periods of time, and therefore the shift in cultural mindsets most likely will require those who support change to further their advocacy, and probably inquiry, as well.)

Film As A Reflection Of Culture

If cultures on a national level and within subsets of those national cultures, such as those that develop within distinct organizational environments, change or evolve, then these changes should be reflected in the artifacts and myths of those cultures. Traditionally, the role of articulating and transmitting values, norms and beliefs in society has been the responsibility of first, legend, as told through story-telling, and then, later, literature. Over the past 80 years, film
has emerged as a major supplement to literature’s role in reflecting, examining, and challenging society’s evolving political and social values. As such, film will often mirror who we believe we are, what we are striving to be, and sometimes what we fear becoming.

Film is a unique and rich medium for the purpose of examining culture because it communicates culture on several levels (Summerfield, 1993). First and foremost, films tell a story about people, their hopes, dreams, challenges and fears, how they relate to others, and what are socially acceptable (and unacceptable) ways of dealing with a variety of issues. Film, therefore, has become an important reflection of our culture and its currently salient issues. Within this context we can identify a diversity of cultural norms and values, some of which remain relatively constant while others are noticeably changing. By examining in film those that are changing and those that are not, we may be able to identify how culture may be changing, and in turn, how these changes influence organizational life.

Analysis of American Film Institute (AFI) Top 100 Films of the 1950s and 1990s

In structuring our use of film as a method for analyzing cultural variables that bear on management theory and practice, we have focused on two sets of films—Western/Action Films of the 1950s and Western/Action Films of the 1990s—from the AFI Top 100 List (see Table 2 for a listing and a description of the selection criteria used by the AFI). The AFI list is a useful tool for analysis because it represents those American films which have received the greatest critical acclaim during their respective decades and, therefore, most likely reflect the dominant social issues of their time.

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| Insert Table 2 Here |

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We chose the 1950s as one of the two comparison decades because that was the period, immediately after World War II, during which modern management theory was born and the first decade in which there was widespread research and public interest in the subject of management. The western/action genre was chosen because it is particularly representative of American culture and would simplify comparisons between the two decades by reducing possible differences due to situational variables in the stories. The content of each film, based on plot, theme(s) and characterization, was examined to determine how it reflected positions along each of the dimensions in the integrated framework proposed in Table 1.

The results of our analyses are presented in Tables 3, 4 and 5. Table 3 provides an analysis of the films from the 1950s; Table 4 provides an analysis of the films from the 1990s; and Table 5 provides a comparison between the two sets of films along each cultural dimension.

Insert Tables 3, 4, and 5

What becomes obvious when the two decades are compared is that the depiction of some cultural dimensions has changed little between the 1950s and the 1990s, while other dimensions have shown significant changes. In general, ability to influence and orientation to space show only slight changes; comfort with ambiguity, individualism/collectivism, and time orientation show the greatest change since the 1950s; and assertiveness is more ambiguous, showing a moderate shift between the two periods (see Table 5). More specifically, the following discussion provides specific examples for each dimension that are representative of our study for the two sets of films in Table 2. Although only selected films are compared in each discussion, the examples are representative of what we found in general (see Tables 3 and 4).
**Ability to influence.** The films of the 50s and the 90s were characterized by similar views about man’s ability to influence outcomes. For example *High Noon*, *Shane*, and *The Searchers*, were situated in social settings with relatively low power distance. The same was the case for all the films from the 90s. In terms of dominance over their environment, both decades also show a strong belief in the ability of man to dominate his environment. Ability to influence, therefore seems to be a relatively stable element in American films over this time period.

**Comfort with ambiguity.** In *Shane* the title character remains essentially static throughout the film and, more significantly, finally recognizes his inability to change even after having undergone a dramatic personal experience. He is who he is and nothing can change that. By comparison, the main character in *Dances With Wolves*, Dunbar, evolves from a soldier with a strong commitment to the U.S. Cavalry to someone with who adopts the values of American Indian culture. Of all the comparisons we examined, this dimension shows the starkest contrast between the two decades.

**Assertiveness.** Assertiveness exhibits some modest change between the two decades. All the heroes of the 1950s films are male, with a strong bias toward *doing*. In the 1990s some gender egalitarianism begins to emerge. In the film *Fargo*, the main character and hero (or heroine) is a woman. The characters from the 50s show little introspection and are usually driven by simple one-dimensional purpose (revenge, anger, racial hatred). By comparison, the characters in the films of the 90s begin to focus on being and introspection. The most obvious examples are Dunbar in *Dances With Wolves* and Bill Muni in *The Unforgiven*.

**Individualism-Collectivism.** *High Noon* and *Pulp Fiction* provide an interesting contrast, illustrating how portrayals along this cultural dimension have changed over the last 40 years. In *High Noon*, the sheriff, as played by Gary Cooper, is both highly principled and focussed on the
welfare of his town, even at the possible cost of his own life, and in spite of the failure of the
town to support him. He does what is right, not what is in his own self interest. In Pulp Fiction
no one is principled, nor do any of the characters display the least concern for anyone other than
themselves.

**Time Orientation.** In Giant the focus is on continuity from the past, as represented by the history
of cattle ranching and the heritage of the Benedict family, to their present struggles with change,
and ultimately with the implications of change both in Texas society and within their own
family. The focus in Goodfellas is clearly on the here and now. The characters concentrate on
such immediate objectives as personal survival and making a “score.” In the end the characters
never question the possible consequences nor the precursors of their actions. They just do it.

**Orientation to Space.** Little change appears to have taken place with regard to orientation to
space between the films of the 50s and the films of the 90s. With the notable exception of
Dances With Wolves, all the films in this study represented a private orientation to space. If there
has been any change in the intervening decades, it has been that there is an increase in the degree
to which space has become private rather than public and this is clearly reflected in all but one of
the films of the 90s.

**Implications**

**Comfort with ambiguity.** The comparison of the films from the 1950s and the 1990s suggests a
shift, to some extent, in U.S. culture. A change in comfort with ambiguity appears to be most
notable. The western/action films of the decade between 1950 - 1959 have clearly defined
characters. The heroes of this era consisted of immutable portrayals of good and evil. Neither
their own efforts nor the circumstances of their situation were able to change their basic nature.
However, western/action films of the 90s were much less inclined to anchor antagonists and
protagonists. In fact, the “heroes” of these more recent films frequently were antagonists as well as protagonists.

The change in culture portrayed in these films may also be recognized in management practice as witnessed by the changing composition of the work force toward greater diversity, the acceptance of alternative lifestyles (e.g. married, single, divorced and gay), less admiration for the “Organization Man” (Whyte, 1956), and the recognition that organizational “heroes” may have a dark side as well.

With respect to management theory, this greater comfort with (or acceptance of) ambiguity is observed in a movement away from “one best way” theories (e.g., Theory X and Y, Herzberg, Blake & Mouton, and trait theories of leadership) to the acceptance of contingency frameworks, and even more acceptance of ambiguity with the emergence of post modernism.

Individualism/Collectivism. Although films of the 50s focused on rugged individualists, their incentive for taking action, in general, went beyond personal gain. The underlying motivation of the heroes was to benefit the group or society, sometimes at great personal sacrifice. While the heroes of the 50s seemed to be more inspired by principle, the roles portrayed in the 90s appeared to be more influenced by individual benefits.

One view of current organizational life seems to demonstrate an emphasis on individualism and personal gain. Starting in the mid-80s and through much of the 90s corporate downsizing has been interpreted by many members of the organization as a lack of commitment to employees. Company loyalty, in many cases, has been replaced with a concern for self interest and preservation. Managing one’s career rather than a belief that the organization will nurture and develop is often the message heard among practitioners as well as being seen in the literature (i.e., management theory) concerning career development.
Time orientation. Motivated by principle and opportunities for a better quality of life, western/action films of the 50s tended to present a broader time orientation. In some cases past, present and future were dramatized. In films of the 90s the focus was much more present oriented and the characters displayed less concern with either the past or the future.

Although strategic planning is emerging as a dominant paradigm in the turbulent 90s, there simultaneously exists a significant present influence. Quarterly profits, which have driven an inflated stock market, are emphasized. Pay for performance systems also tend to center on current performance. The past seems to have little impact on management practice--what “worked in the past” is generally discounted as an implementation strategy. As Neil Postman (1986) points out, the future is seen as too uncertain to provide any guidance for current behavior or decisions and the past is seen as increasingly irrelevant to today’s issues.

Film as a Teaching Tool

In researching management, and particularly in teaching management, one must deal with both the rational and the non-rational as well as the explicit and implicit. Although sometimes difficult to implement, the rational aspects of management theory are relatively easy to describe and explain. Examples of such rational concepts would be: strategic planning systems, organization structure, policies and procedures, quantitative decision-making, career planning, etc. Non-rational dimensions of management are more difficult to describe and explain to students. These aspects of organizational life are implicit or emotional and therefore more difficult to communicate clearly and unambiguously to others—they often need to be directly experienced before they can be understood. Examples of the non-rational would be: resistance to change, charismatic leadership, functional myopia, group development, and organizational politics.
Film provides an effective means of teaching the cultural dimensions of our society that underlie many of the salient issues in management practice. As such, film may provide students with a window to some of the cultural variables which influence management theory and practice, but which they have not personally experienced. As such, it can be a very effective teaching tool. In addition it provides several other advantages. It can clearly demonstrate, in a short period, change and evolution of both individuals and groups, making the steps in the change process more apparent. By communicating on several levels and through multiple channels, film can provide a richer understanding of complex interpersonal and organizational processes. Finally film helps address two of the most difficult issues in management education: motivation and retention.

**Film as a Research Tool**

As a tool for research, film may provide a rich source of information about a society’s culture and that culture’s influence on individual and group behavior. We see three possible directions in which this research can be usefully extended. First is to extend and refine the framework for analyzing films developed for this paper. Our integration of the Hofstede and Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck frameworks still needs further development. Phillips and Boyacigiller (1998) have shown the value of more sophisticated frameworks for examining the inherent complexity of cultures, both national and organizational. There are clearly additional variables that can be used to examine the link between culture as represented in film and culture as it impacts management practice.

The second extension we propose is to apply this form of analysis across national boundaries rather than across time within one national context. A comparison of culture as expressed in foreign films with those of American motion pictures may provide an interesting
and useful way of making cross-cultural comparisons that inform our understanding of similarities and differences between organizational practices in different countries and regions.

Finally, we believe that films, such as the ones examined in this paper can serve to develop hypotheses about differences among cultures along a variety of dimensions and their changes (or stability) over time.

As with good literature, high quality films tell us about ourselves, challenge us to confront our shortcomings, and help us celebrate our triumphs, as individuals and as a society. As a social science, management theory attempts to study these same things within the more narrow confines of organizational settings. We need to find ways to tap this potentially rich resource more effectively for both research and teaching.
References


### Table 1
Cultural Frameworks
Integration of Hofstede and Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Integrated Cultural Dimensions</th>
<th>Hofstede</th>
<th>Kluckhohn &amp; Strodtbeck</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ability to Influence</td>
<td>Power Distance</td>
<td>Relation to Nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfort with Ambiguity</td>
<td>Uncertainty Avoidance</td>
<td>Basic Human Nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertiveness</td>
<td>Masculinity</td>
<td>Activity Orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualism / Collectivism</td>
<td>Individual / Collective</td>
<td>Nature of Relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Orientation</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>Time Orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation to Space</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>Orientation to Space</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2
AFI “Top 100” Films* of the 1950s and 1990s
Western/Action Genre

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Films of the 1950s</th>
<th>Films of the 1990s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Ben Hur (1959)</td>
<td>• Dances With Wolves (1990)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Bridge on the River Kwai (1957)</td>
<td>• Fargo (1996)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Giant (1956)</td>
<td>• Goodfellas (1990)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• High Noon (1952)</td>
<td>• Pulp Fiction (1994)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Shane (1953)</td>
<td>• The Unforgiven (1992)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The Searchers (1956)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Films on the AFI “Top 100” List were selected by the American Film Institute, a prestigious, nonprofit arts organization, as part of a celebration of the first century of movie making. The choices were made by a wide range of individuals associated with the film business, based on criteria which permitted consideration of any film with “significant American financial or artistic participation.”*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Films / Cultural Dimensions</th>
<th>Ability to Influence</th>
<th>Comfort W/ Ambiguity</th>
<th>Assertiveness</th>
<th>Individualism/ Collectivism</th>
<th>Time Orientation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ben Hur</td>
<td>Low power distance</td>
<td>Low comfort</td>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td>Collectivism</td>
<td>Past, Past, Future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridge on the River Kwai</td>
<td>Low power distance</td>
<td>Low comfort</td>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td>Collectivism</td>
<td>Past &amp; Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giant</td>
<td>High power distance</td>
<td>Low comfort</td>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td>Collectivism</td>
<td>Past, Past, Future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Noon</td>
<td>Low power distance</td>
<td>Low comfort</td>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td>Collectivism</td>
<td>Past, Past, Future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shane</td>
<td>Low power distance</td>
<td>Low comfort</td>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td>Collectivism</td>
<td>Past, Past, Future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Searchers</td>
<td>Low power distance</td>
<td>Low comfort</td>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td>Collectivism</td>
<td>Past &amp; Present</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3
1950s Western/Action Film Analysis
### Table 4

**1990s Western/Action Film Analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Films / Cultural Dimensions</th>
<th>Ability to Influence</th>
<th>Comfort W/Ambiguity</th>
<th>Assertiveness</th>
<th>Individualism/Collectivism</th>
<th>Time Orientation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dances With Wolves</td>
<td>• Low power distance • Dominant &amp; In Harmony</td>
<td>• High comfort</td>
<td>• Masculine • Being &amp; Doing</td>
<td>• Individualism &amp; Collectivism • Personal</td>
<td>• Past &amp; present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fargo</td>
<td>• Low power distance • Dominant &amp; In Harmony</td>
<td>• High comfort</td>
<td>• Feminine &amp; Masculine • Doing</td>
<td>• Individualism &amp; Collectivism • Principle</td>
<td>• Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodfellas</td>
<td>• Low power distance • Dominant</td>
<td>• High comfort</td>
<td>• Masculine • Doing</td>
<td>• Individualism • Personal</td>
<td>• Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulp Fiction</td>
<td>• Low power distance • Dominant</td>
<td>• High comfort</td>
<td>• Masculine • Doing</td>
<td>• Individualism • Personal</td>
<td>• Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Unforgiven</td>
<td>• Low power distance • Dominant</td>
<td>• High comfort</td>
<td>• Masculine • Being &amp; Doing</td>
<td>• Individualism • Personal</td>
<td>• Present</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5
Comparison of General Characteristics 1950s and 1990s AFI “Top 100” Films
Using Integrated Cultural Framework
Western/Action Genre*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Variables</th>
<th>Top AFI Films of the 1950s</th>
<th>Top AFI Films of the 1990s</th>
<th>Degree of Influence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ability to Influence</strong></td>
<td>• Low power to influence – high ability to influence</td>
<td>• Low power to influence – high ability to influence</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Dominant relationship with the environment</td>
<td>• Dominant relationship with the environment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comfort with Ambiguity</strong></td>
<td>• Low comfort with ambiguity</td>
<td>• High degree of comfort with ambiguity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assertiveness</strong></td>
<td>• Masculine</td>
<td>• Masculine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Doing</td>
<td>• Being</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individualism/Collectivism</strong></td>
<td>• Collectivism and principle</td>
<td>• Individualism and self-interest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time Orientation</strong></td>
<td>• Past, present &amp; future (long-term)</td>
<td>• Present (short-term)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Orientation to Space</strong></td>
<td>• Private</td>
<td>• Private</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The selection of Westerns and Action films was based on their position as an American genre and therefore more likely to be representative of the way Americans see themselves and their culture. Other genres from these periods may also provide equally useful insights but were omitted in order to simplify the analysis.