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Culture as a System of Shared Meaning: Exploring Intercultural Leadership Identity Through Practical Application

Emily Patrick

University of San Diego, epatrick@sandiego.edu

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INTERCULTURAL LEADERSHIP IDENTITY THROUGH PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Culture as a System of Shared Meaning:

Exploring Intercultural Leadership Identity Through Practical Application

Emily E. "Molly" Patrick

University of San Diego

CULTURE AS A SYSTEM OF SHARED MEANING: EXPLORING INTERCULTURAL LEADERSHIP IDENTITY THROUGH PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Abstract

This explorative, inductive, applied research study aims to examine the intersection of intercultural communication of values and leadership identities and capacities. Using existing and guiding cultural value theories, experiential learning techniques, meaning making ideologies, and adult learning principles, a two-and-a-half-hour intensive workshop was designed for a group of twenty eight leadership and entrepreneurship students, predominantly Mexican nationals at the Tecnológico de Monterrey in Mexico, City. Specifically, the study demonstrates how culture affects leadership identities and capacities using the agreed upon symbols, rituals, heroes and values that make up each culture's perspectives, practices or applications of culture in everyday life. The expressed values of the individual help inform their leadership capacities, and therefore help contribute to the whole nation state's idea of what is desired and what is not. These desired symbols, images, and behaviors reproduced in the media reflect that culture and enforce values, norms, expectations and practices therein (Trend, 2016). This exploration is a way to decipher those values they are personally held that inform leadership as well as more widely held values that are perpetuated through institutions and media. An interdisciplinary approach combining sociology, psychological anthropology, adult learning theory, and leadership theories are used to analyze the effects and themes of the experience of the undergraduate students in order to inform further research in this area. Historical literature and critiques were examined in order to create a concrete rationale and purpose for further work in this field. Cultural values, intercultural communication, meaning making and the impact of the workshop itself are analyzed based on self-observations, written evaluations of the participants and the theoretical principles aforementioned. Workshop outcomes, themes, suggestions for

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further research as well as a personal reflection of the practitioner experience concludes the study.

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Introduction and Literature Review

No one can control where they are born, when they are born, or who their parents are. Similarly, no one can remove oneself from their multifaceted cultural context. The term culture itself has countless definitions, dimensions, and layers, and is a complex web that intersects in many places to make up the contextual framework that individuals and groups use to navigate this world. Since culture is so complex, it proves to be increasingly hard to process, explain, and understand. The original Latin translation most literally means “cultivation of soil” or “the act of preparing the earth for crops” (Hofstede, 1991). A handful of early philosophers and thinkers such as Cicero, Friedrich Nietzsche, and William Butler Yeats began to adapt the term to the figurative understanding describing it as a cultivation through education, a systematic improvement and refinement of the mind, and, in Yeats’s words, the “sanctity of the intellect”. A later French definition which documents culture as “the training or refining of the mind, manners, and general taste”, highlighting the definitive evolution of the term. Culture, for the purpose of this applied capstone project, will be defined as the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that depends on the capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations. Understanding culture as a system of shared meaning is what this capstone aims to explore through an applied project workshop format.

As a universal human concept agreed upon by many theorists, academics, and researchers, culture encompasses a very broad topic, representing both the unique phenomena present within any given social group and the conceptual framework through which to interpret our surroundings. Cultural understandings and creations occur through learned human experiences, and we develop our identities from these experiences. These identities are then influenced and reinforced by media images and other sources of socially shared content, ideas,

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happenings, and traditions. Culture, in essence, represents the social rules agreed upon within any human social context, the processes through which we reach agreements, and the containers in which we interact. When we begin to examine the systems from which we are oriented, we then learn to understand the construct of culture. When spoken about in a static way, culture represents concrete traits that people of certain groups possess. However, there is evidence that culture is much more fluid, dynamic, and elusive than that. If we take the time to closely analyze how culture evolves over time, we begin to better understand the structure of group dynamics and individual identity influenced by said culture.

From the overarching concept of culture comes the identification of value sets for any given group or social collective. Cultural values are the core principles and ideals upon which an entire community exists. This is made up of several parts: customs, which are traditions and rituals; values, which are beliefs; and culture, which is all of a group's guiding values (Hofstede, 1984). Cultural values are ultimately prescribed and based on lived experience. When values are “under threat”, individuals and groups will stand their ground to defend them and/or inevitably adapt to change based on the given context (Hofstede, 1991). Since culture is an agreed upon phenomena, there is always room for adaptation and change over time. People within a culture must agree upon the values and rules most important to them. The set values are extremely essential to any cultural context, as are the ways in which groups specifically derive meaning from those values. Meaning making in this context can provide data on “how” groups and cultures make decisions on these values, and what is ultimately most important to them. In order to study the language of a target culture, one should also understand how human beings construct meanings, understand processes of meaning-making, account for different meanings, and examine their effects in social life (Meaning Making). In modern Western cultures, individuals

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are constantly bombarded with who they are expected to be, what we they are supposed to value, and how they are supposed to act from an infinite pool of external sources. The symbols and images one sees in the media, along with the beliefs of authority figures imposed throughout one's upbringing, perpetuate the skewed view of what is really important to an individual or group. But how are people supposed to decipher and understand what is truly right and meaningful to them? Since values are prescribed, there is an apparent gap in learning how to navigate values and understand culture in internally productive and meaningful ways. This is why the adaptation of cultural awareness, meaning making, and leadership identity is important to apply within a practical learning context.

From the standpoint of the individual, personalities are dictated by culture, yet individual choices are autonomous. Thoughts and beliefs may be controlled heavily by culture, but how one chooses to respond is based on one's own choice and free will. An individual interprets the world through their unique cultural lens, and, consciously or subconsciously, thinks and acts based on what they know about values and instincts. What especially draws people to the culture construct as a system is that it provides members with a sense of belonging and inclusion within a society or group and creates an environment in which individuals can develop a unique sense of self and function effectively. Culture has an influence on the perceptions, thought patterns, judgments and actions of all members of any given society. The culture-specific system of orientation creates possibilities and motivation for action, but also determines the conditions and limits of the action (Thomas, 2006). Thomas also goes on to describe how all human beings live within a specific culture and contribute to its development. Because of this, culture dictates the way we think, feel and act. The American psychologist Harry Triandis, for example, defines culture as "the human-made part of the environment" (Triandis,1989). Thus, in order to study the

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language of a target culture, one should understand how human beings construct meanings, understand processes of meaning-making, account for different meanings, and examine their effects in social life. Ultimately, the way we make meaning matters in how we make decisions and take up leadership (Trend, 2016).

As majority opinions and values change, so too can entire cultures. The field of Cultural Evolution aims at studying this cultural change phenomena. It takes into consideration learned facets of culture, and identifies what is necessary to unlearn, adapt and transform them. The concept of leadership, too, encompasses all of these cultural facets, bringing individuals, ideas and movements toward complex social change processes based on rooted cultural values. Since culture shapes how we think, feel and act (Hofstede, 1984), it naturally impacts one's individual leadership identity. Leadership itself is shaped by culture, yet leadership implementation has the power to shape, change and transform it therein. Cultural values are mechanisms through which people can better understand themselves and their leadership identities. And since values are the building blocks of culture, communicating values and ideals is necessary to maintaining cultural norms and practices. In fact, communicating values, implementing change and managing perception also happen to be acts of leadership. Agency and the potential to change and/or influence communities' links culture to leadership, but this connection is often omitted when approaching leadership exploration and education. In order to fully examine the mutual influences of culture and leadership, communication, identity and intersectionality will be examined through this applied capstone project. The project further aims to utilize cultural frameworks and meaning making to understand its influence in leadership identity and practice through practical application. The practical application portion has been presented through an experiential culture and leadership identity workshop, where students were tasked with exploring

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the roots of their cultural influences in relation to their present leadership identities. Since every individual has a unique perspective and set of cultural values, this workshop sought to take students through a meaning making process to better understand who they are and in what ways they are approaching their individual styles of leadership.

There are a plethora of iterations on what culture is comprised of, but theorists and researchers agree that aspects of culture are social constructs, in that they are taught and learned socially and determined by the environment. Socially learned ideas equate the basis of what culture represents, and culture shapes how we think, feel and act (Hofstede, 2011). According to Rost's paradigm, leadership can be seen as a relationship of influence, where real change occurs with a mutual purpose in the context of relationships (Rost, 1997). By examining the intersection of leadership and culture, in a new way, we begin to build upon those earlier theories and adapt them for today's emerging leaders.

Hofstede is the most well known and most cited theorist in the cultural and cross-cultural arena, and became the founder of comparative intercultural research. He remains most famous for his *Culture's Consequences* (1984) and *Cultural Dimensions* (1981), but is also noted for his more recent "Software of the Mind" and the Onion Model (1991). This model conceptualized four (later five) different categories or attributes cultures could demonstrate, based on large scale surveys, specifically looking at ways in which the national values of a country could be examined and analyzed. The dimensions power distance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, uncertainty avoidance index, long term orientation versus short term normative orientation, and indulgence versus constraint, allocate where each of the countries fall on a scale (Hofstede, 2011).

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Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory is a framework for cross-cultural communication. This was the first massive categorization used to differentiate the different behavioral traits commonly attributed to people belonging to a culture. His work with these cultural dimensions was integral and the first of its kind to attempt to generalize cultural values and behaviors on such a large scale. His work is the most cited and most used for managerial and business leadership across the globe. His most recent "Software of the Mind" (1991) suggests culture is a learned unit of understanding in the greater field of organizational behavior and leadership. This is closely related to the concept of mental models which are used frequently in regards to identifying stereotypes and assumptions (Johnson-Laird, 1980). Terms such as groupthink and mob mentality are somewhat antiquated terms but serve to explain the same group dynamic phenomena; groups that act together and presumably agree on how to think together can represent something more than the sum of their parts of the whole. This suggests that the conglomeration of the society of a nation is more than all of the traits of the sum of its citizens, it becomes its own entity.

Furthermore, the Cultural Onion Model specifically, highlights the core values as the basis of what makes up a cultural understanding for an individual. It is important to note that these concepts are self-referential, because the frame of reference can only be in relation to one's own culture. This presents both a contradictory and complex circumstance. It is an ever-present dichotomy of the individual perception and the group, community, nation etc. (Hofstede, 2011).

These categories had never before been so comprehensive, hence they are relevant to any cross-cultural discussion. The surveys are still conducted to this day and have been favored by many managerial and business writings due to its prevalence and applicability. Hofstede's works have been popular and used since conception in the late 1970s and early 1980s. He was

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influenced by early theorists, sociologists in the field, garnering a systems or nation-level unit of analysis (Taylor, 1994). Such as the term sociological imagination, termed by C. Wright Mills, he states that, “imagination is the capacity to shift from one perspective to another – from the political to the psychological; from examination of a single family to comparative assessment of the national budgets of the world; from the theological school to the military establishment; from considerations of an oil industry to studies of contemporary poetry. It is the capacity to range from the most intimate features of the human self – and to see the relations between the two” (Mills, 1959).

Hofstede’s dimensions were adapted and elaborated on by Minkov who added an additional 4 dimensions to earlier Hofstede and worked to expand on the original dimensions. Minkov coined the phrase “people's ways of thinking are culturally constrained”. Fons Trompenaar adds to his competing, seven versions of cultural dimensions a layer of empathy for culture, not previously addressed specifically by Hofstede (Minkov, 2011).

Because of Hofstede’s work culture is frequently thought of as an interactive aggregate of common characteristics that influence a human group’s response to an environment. When personality and culture interact, the field of psychological anthropology emerges. In general, psychological anthropology refers to the action of drawing meaningful conclusions as to the influences that culture has on mental health, motivation, cognition, emotions and perception, psychological anthropologists study the patterns of human development (Bock, 2011). As all aspects and viewpoints are simultaneously working together to produce one’s perception of reality. Because of this psychological anthropology, the study of the human mind and its mental, emotional, behavioral, and motivational thought processes is essential to acknowledge as part of a bigger web of fields that produce a larger understanding (Beatty, 2013). The interaction of

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culture on mental processes are important because it is interdisciplinary in scope, and aims to uncover the why and the impact it has on the consciousness of the group in question. These factors extrapolate on Hofstede's foundation and include some aspects that may be missing in his most recent iteration. The consensus for shared values, has widespread uses and applications.

According to Christopher Early, "Culture is not a value; culture is the meaning we attach to aspects of the world around us. "Meaning as culture" through means of sets of values (Nakata, 2009). The World Values Survey (WVS) was also developed after as an addition and branched compliment to Hofstede's work, and is frequently updated. It is easily accessible on the internet as well, providing far reaching framework for comparing cultural values between countries.

According to GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness), and Robert J. House in 1991, these "practices" (symbols, rituals and heroes) are both what cultures do presently, and values as what people think culture should be (subconsciously). As discussed earlier this can be compared with desired versus real behaviors and thoughts that are representations of agreed upon aspects of a culture (House, 2004).

Moving to individuals' explanations and experiences with culture, it would be important to focus on theories having to do with the individual experience and competencies. Intercultural Effectiveness Scale and the Intercultural Competence assessment have been other ways in which this topic is explored on an individual level but there needs to be more research and explore (Hannigan, 1990). While these methods of measurement focus on the individual but are not examined in detail in this study because of the relative access to these assessments was not available.

Social identity theory (SIT), created by social psychologists Henri Tajfel and John Turner in the 1970s and the 1980s, introduced the concept as a way in which to explain intergroup

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behavior. It has been touted as an overly simplified explanation, where an individual can only be said to belong to a single “culture” or group, focusing on the social context to dictate behavior. This ignores the intersectionality of identity. Since we are taking an interdisciplinary approach to this phenomena. It can also explain the behaviors we see when groups of different cultures are forced to interact an-in group out group tendencies are strong (Burke, 2009).

Conflict theory focuses on how values differ between groups within a culture, while functionalism focuses on the shared values within a culture. Any one culture, including subcultures, though, may harbor conflicting values. For instance, the value of material gain may conflict with the value of philanthropy. Or the value of equality may conflict with the value of individualism. Such contradictions may exist due to an inconsistency between people's actions and their professed values, which explains why sociologists must carefully distinguish between what people do and what they say. Real culture refers to the values and norms that a society actually follows, while ideal culture refers to the values and norms that a society professes to believe (Deardorff, 2014).

Going beyond Hofstede, the theories, models, and limitations have been extensively examined. It has been championed for the ability to adapt over time and remain relevant, but there are currently perspectives and suggestions for improvement as well as gaps in Hofstede’s model have been criticized for treating culture as a single variable. It presents an idealistic, rigid set of attributes about whole countries “Beyond Hofstede” (Nakata, 2009). A comprehensive review of the impact of Hofstede's framework is lacking but some have attempted to fill in the gaps, stating “Hofstede ‘ignores everything... but the culture level comparisons’ (Kirkman, 2006) reducing culture to an overly simplistic four or five dimension conceptualization; limiting

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the sample to a single multinational corporation; failing to capture the malleability of culture over time; and ignoring within-country cultural heterogeneity (Kirkman, 2006).

Meaning-Making in Context of Adult Learning

This concept, adapted from psychology, meaning-making is the process of how people construe, understand, or make sense of life events, relationships, and the self. While this can present as somewhat subjective, the literature states that “Meaning making” designates the process by which people interpret situations, events, objects, or discourses, in the light of their previous knowledge and experience. It is very closely related to other interdisciplinary fields as it draws upon holistic and shared patterns in human development. Adult learning theory speaks of meaning making as one of the central pillars or intentions for implementation. This typically involves searching for a more favorable understanding of the situation and its implications. Meaning making may also entail reconsidering global beliefs and revising goals (Mansell, 1981) and questioning or revising one's sense of meaning in life. Meaning making is the lynch pin for bounded understanding, and what makes consensus and agreement within groups possible. While this is an individual process, it is replicated, communicated hundreds of thousands of times over to produce what cultural norms represent in any given group. This is specifically important with regards to topic of adult learning or Andragogy (Knowles, 1990).

Andragogy in Greek means “Man-Leading”, and is the most common reference to the study of Adult Learning Theory (Knowles, 1990). Andragogy is not culture based, nor is it content based, rather it has revealed that the most important, and impactful part of adult learning is the experiential component. Malcolm Knowles is best known for his research in this topic and his four Principles of Andragogy, first presented in 1984, are still held up today. Knowles suggested four principles that are applied to adult learning: Adults need to be involved in the

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planning and evaluation of their instruction, experience (including mistakes) provides the basis for the learning activities, adults are most interested in learning subjects that have immediate relevance and impact to their job or personal life and adult learning is problem-centered rather than content-oriented (Mezirow, 1991). The focus on the adult learning is due to the audiences most likely to encounter these topics in the curriculum. Andragogy literature also states there are six developmental pillars that support why the adult learning is so different than the early childhood development. The pillars are as follows:

1. Self-Concept - As a person matures his/her self-concept moves from one of being a dependent personality toward one of being a self-directed human being.
2. Adult Learner Experience- As a person matures he/she accumulates a growing reservoir of experience that becomes an increasing resource for learning.
3. Readiness to Learn -As a person matures his/her readiness to learn becomes oriented increasingly to the developmental tasks of his/her social roles
4. Orientation to Learning -As a person matures his/her time perspective changes from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediacy of application. As a result, his/her orientation toward learning shifts from one of subject- centeredness to one of problem centeredness.
5. Motivation to Learn - As a person matures the motivation to learn is internal (Knowles 1990).

These concepts are drawn upon throughout the design and implementation of the curriculum in order to present the best possible learning experience.

Gaps in the Literature

The gaps in the literature presented themselves because of the nature of the combination of so many different concepts. While some theories spoke strictly to the cultural context and intricacies of the group dynamics, others did not mention the effects on leadership nor the

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application in an adult learning environment. There is considerable lack of research on group teaching about individual leadership capacities in this experiential way including intercultural learning. This specific combination of aspects would benefit from a more intersectional approach in regards to intercultural leadership identity. There were only a few studies that looked at teaching culture alongside leadership in a holistic way, and the field could stand to gain a very new and emerging subcategory, if the learning principles were applied to such areas.

Statement of Problem

We live in an increasingly multicultural world with the spread of global capitalism. What comes with this phenomena comes the spread of ideas, ideologies and cultural values. More contact with other cultures, does not mean the world is getting smaller, but we have more access to each other and more opportunities to interact. This unfortunately, means there are more opportunities to misunderstand each other as well. Culture and biases are deeply imbedded in each individual and impacts our identity and the way we interact with the world.

When we see people who have diverse cultural backgrounds interact without a proper foundation for interaction we see and increase in misunderstandings. These misunderstandings can present themselves in small ways, such as microaggressions, but can also have long lasting detrimental effects on a community, nation and individual. Increasing animosity and misunderstandings for example can be demonstrated by the hate crimes increasing the past four years. The biggest offenses (bias motivations), were committed against differences of race, ethnicity and ancestry 59.6%, then religion 20%, then sexual orientation 15% (FBI Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program's annual *Hate Crime Statistics* report).

In a place such as the United States we cannot ignore the fact that our classrooms, grocery stores, schools and workplaces are not homogenous. USA and Xenophobia have

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become synonymous, and it will have huge effects on our country's influence and success on a global scale if we cannot learn to understand each other and communicate effectively. On an individual level, having cultural competency can increase personal marketability, stemming from adaptability. Lack of cultural sensitivity in business dealings can offend prospective or current clients, alienate employees who work in local other locations across the globe, and have a negative effect on a company's bottom line. It is necessary to be able to speak about the differences of culture as a means of understanding the other. In fact, despite the evidence that groups are different from each other, we tend to believe that deep inside all people are the same. It is human nature as we are generally not aware or conscious of other countries' cultures, we tend to minimize cultural differences. This leads to misunderstandings and misinterpretations between people from different countries (Moodian, 2009).

The best way to survive in a multicultural world is to first understand one's cultural values and the cultural values with those we seek to cooperate with (I would argue this should be everyone). Under "normal" everyday conditions, a person living in a culturally familiar setting is likely to be understood and accepted by other members of the collective who share the same cultural background (Thomas, 2006). However, if one is forced to interact with or live in another culture that is vastly different than one's dominant culture, the more risk of their behaviors, and actions being perceived as less culturally desirable.

With the growth of the global market and as the new generations begin to enter the workforce, the need for culturally competent leaders will be exponentially more necessary. Millennials value connectivity and are uniquely suited to lead from an inclusive orientation, 45% raised in collective cultures, the need to understand has never been more crucial (Boitano, 2017) has said that any forward-thinking business must consider inclusion and cultural

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competency as an important part of daily operations. Jean Lipman-Blumen, organizational behavior professor at Claremont Graduate University, is quoted, “We live in a world where inclusion is critical and connection is inevitable” (Boitano, 2017). Increasingly the skills required to tackle these situations and global issues are noted as; an understanding that individuals are shaped, but not bounded, by their cultural background (Kim, 1992).

We live in a world where change is inevitable, cultures and their values are changing and are more fluid than ever before, and we will be challenged to reflect upon our core values more and more often, be able to communicate them to others. Due to the agreed upon concept of Cultural Evolution, it can be argued that the present emerging leaders of tomorrow have some agency to shape the culture in the future (Van, 2012). One’s culture, and therefore upbringing and mindset has a huge impact on how they will operate and engage with others. The engagement and reflection on our own biases and cultural mindset or “mental models” this can contribute to meaning making to communicate more effectively (Johnson-Laird, 1980). The more we are in tune with its intricacies and impact on our perceptions and actions, the more we can use this knowledge to become more confident, inclusive and effective leaders, and work together to solve cross-cultural and global issues.

How can we begin to unlearn some of our cultural beliefs in order to better understand each other? Values, and core values specifically, are an essential part of culture. If we take it one step further to make meaning of the values we hold, we stand to make broad strokes for learning how we interact with each other. Adaptive leadership and authentic leadership is necessary more than ever.

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Culture is both overly defined and not specific enough, we all think we know what it means to be immersed in a culture, but when you try to explain it in common practical terms it becomes much harder to do so. Culture shapes/informs everything because it→ will shape how people lead, what happens when we teach culture alongside leadership?

Leadership Context

Rost's (1993) paradigm indicates that leadership is a relationship of influence where real change occurs with a mutual purpose in the context of relationships (Rost, 1997).” This is an example of just one way the examination of the ways in which we can attempt to make meaning out of differences across cultural boundaries, whilst discovering a deeper sense of self to inform leadership capacities through relationships and how those influenced. How can we unlearn some of our cultural beliefs in order to better understand each other? Values/core values specifically are essential part of culture. If we take it one step further to make meaning of the values we hold, we stand to make broad strokes for learning how interactions shape the communication with each other. In regard to values “software of the mind” (Minkov, 2011), it is stated that the ways in which values are expressed and communicated are an act of and central leadership in all arenas.

Purpose

The purpose of this inductive applied project is to create curriculum that addresses the social constructs and context of cultural values that inform aspects of intercultural communication and leadership capacities; specifically, the ways in which meaning is derived as a gateway into intercultural understanding and communication. Furthermore, the curriculum and intention of this applied project is to cultivate a foundation of curiosity as a means to learn about diverse problems and populations and inspire a willingness to take charge of complex issues

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surrounding leadership, cultural differences, and social responsibility. To do this, the project aimed to apply interdisciplinary approaches and experiential learning to adaptive challenges and meaning making as a way to better understand ourselves and our leadership identities in multiple contexts. This was ultimately achieved by cultivating a space to learn and engage in cross-cultural understanding and unpack unconscious habits, behaviors and thoughts that are dictated by our culture. This work yields results in self-awareness, cultural sensitivity, emotional intelligence, and development of effective leadership skills. By using an existing framework for guidance in the field, the curriculum was based on theories of adult learning pedagogy, Hofstede's cultural onion model and experiential learning. The facilitation team used best practices to conduct the workshop to closely adhere to those models. Upcoming iterations of the workshops will incorporate feedback and themes gathered from participants and facilitator observations to adapt and refine curriculum content and activity duration.

The guiding research questions for the project were as follows:

- How can we cultivate and train more culturally competent leaders?
- What is necessary to lead in an ever diversifying world?
- What happens when we teach culture?
- How do we engage authentically when our culture is changing along with society as a whole?
- To what extent do experiences shape your perspective of your own culture?
- How can we make meaning of our culture in a ways that inform our individual lived experience and therefore our leadership capacities?

Rationale

I am a native San Diegan and from a young age, I was initially exposed to Baja California Mexican culture and geography primarily due to routine family vacations. We are a small

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Caucasian family, comprised of me, my mom, and my dad, who speak less than perfect Spanish. We know that when we step foot on Mexican soil that we instantly become the minority, but that did not stop my parents from being open to the unfamiliar and appreciative of the culture as a whole. Our most frequent trips were to Rosarito, Ensenada and places like Mazatlan and Puerto Vallarta, partly because of the proximity and mainly because it was more an affordable way for two elementary school teachers to experience a somewhat lavish vacation. I also remembered my mother talking about how much she genuinely enjoyed her experiences in Mexico. I believe her influence has a lot to do with how my leadership perspective, identity and capacities have come to be. Being exposed to different cultures is an indescribable feeling, exhilarating, like jumping into the deep end of a cold pool head first. I was taken to Mexico for the first time at the age of two, and even then, I could sense the differences of culture and lifestyles. But now, at the ripe age of 29, I am able to more accurately articulate my experience and appreciation. This sparked my obsession with culture, and not only specifically in Mexican and American comparisons. I became interested in how the cross section of my experiences in Mexico, with Mexican natives, and those who emigrated from Mexico to the U.S. intertwined in a bi-national region. This curiosity has shaped my perspective, empathy, and leadership identity, and I have taken up opportunities to learn more about the board region and intercultural education. This work can be overwhelming at times, especially for someone who looks like a typical ignorant gringa like myself. I am always asking things like: What can I be doing better? or How can I see things from another perspective? Since my admiration for cultural comparisons and education is so deeply rooted, I am personally and academically committed to furthering the work from this applied project.

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My personal leadership theory is informed by the way I decided to design and implement this project. It stems from a mixture of aspects drawing from inclusive, adaptive and transformational leadership. Aspirations to adhere authentic leadership also bleeds through my attempt to be critical and inquisitive at every step of the way. At the end of the day, inclusive leadership is the cornerstone my leadership identity, with the goal being to honestly treat everyone with dignity and respect, and challenge both myself and others to question how we can elevate inclusivity in a way that is sustainable and scalable.

Significance of Study

An argument for this type of cultural values study is that it will continue be relevant and important due to the fact that cultures and values are so vast and intricate and that they have the ability to change over time; a term which is more formally known as cultural evolution (Kealey, 1989). In fact, cultural values are assumed to develop over time after repeated exposure to multiple facets of culture (Hofstede, 1980; Karim, 2003). For this reason alone, it is necessary to develop effective, nuanced, and transformational ways of talking and learning about cultural differences and how they impact leadership in myriad ways.

Another compelling reason for this approach is that diversity studies have grown exponentially, but cultural value education has rarely been examined in favor of the changing demographics (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity) in recent times (Kirkman, 2006). This exclusion exists despite the finding that a deep level diversity (i.e., differences due to values or beliefs) is more important for group functioning and understanding group dynamics than the general surface level (i.e., demographic) diversity umbrella, especially over time (Kirkman, 2006).

Many sectors have undergone varieties of diversity and inclusion initiatives and champion multiculturalism as a way to increase awareness and understanding in the workplace

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and in schools. As both an employee and current graduate student in higher education, I can argue these approaches have been primarily surface level, introductory, and simplistic, providing a “band-aid” fix where greater understanding, commitment, training, and education is needed. The motivation for pursuing diversity and inclusion is to better promote inclusivity within systems that have largely been discriminatory or exclusive in previous history. Institutions seek alignment with their new cultural values to promote a stronger sense of fairness and belonging. The diversity push has been proven to contribute to increased productivity and positive, so employers have been seeking ways in which to implement these types of programs despite fully investing in comprehensive training and education that digs deeper for employees (Kirkman, 2006).

It is imperative that the learner be included in conversations to self-examine themselves within the context of their own leadership, authority, role and impact. This belief is grounded in the andragogy or adult learning theory that highlights the following for best practice for adult learners; problem centered, immediate relevance and experiential in nature (Mezirow, 1991).

The style, model and chosen activities were specifically selected to highlight and produce a deeper level of self, community, nation and culture, and demonstrate the core standard of andragogy. Andragogy principles cite meaning making as central to adult learning along with the problem centric point of view. Experiential learning, with the unit of analysis as the individual in an inductive applied project, uses theory to guide the curriculum and expands on categorization to customization and intersectionality of culture (Mezirow, 1991).

With cultural learning or cross-cultural communicative skills, there is usually very little consideration given to the learners' developmental stages. The consequences of ill-matched activities can lead to reaffirmed or deeper cultural misunderstandings, with little or no growth in

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intercultural competency (Kim, 1992). This is a major point of concern, and why drafting curriculum and experiential activities is something that should require special training and care. In order to prevent misunderstandings and awkward situations, it is better to widen our knowledge, change our truth and accept compromises concerning view of life, world, social norms etc., for the sake of collaboration and collective effort. Tolerance, openness to other perspectives and willingness to solve misunderstandings will go towards truly understanding other cultures. Every person within a group can contribute to the success of meeting between members of different cultures (Boitano, 2017)

In addition, modern workplace and educational spaces will continue to need to provide education on this subject for years to come. Implications are to further the study of culture as cultures evolve and adapt, creating a more complete picture of how it affects our leadership.

Today, we have the potential and ability to prevent cultural misunderstandings. This research is working to give us a framework for making meaning out of the societal constructs we operate from. Examining the ways in which we show up can expand our capacities to grow ourselves and our teams. By attempting to create alternative cultural values frameworks, we forgo the limitations of making unnecessary generalizations and deepen participants' understanding of how culture impacts their leadership behaviors, thought patterns and actions.

Leadership Theory & Personal Leadership Theory

My personal leadership theory is based on inclusive, adaptive and transformational leadership. These three perspectives on leadership were selected based on my personal connection and experiences with them in providing me with great positive growth over the course of my lifetime. They also channel the ways in which I seek to approach cultural leadership curriculum development moving forward. Inclusive leadership is highly people-

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centric, and promotes active listening, cultivating safe and collaborative environments, and being able to recognize and celebrate the talents and motivations of teams. Adaptive leadership provides a framework for helping individuals, groups, organizations and systems hold steady in uncertain times and find better ways to adapt and thrive in every-changing and challenging environments. Transformational leadership is an approach that inspires and creates lasting internal change within individuals and social systems. Each of these theories and perspectives on leadership involve understanding diversity, inclusion and intersectionality as a means of developing self and cultural awareness while navigating one's own leadership abilities. Each of these theories also promote the designation of a space or context to learn, collaborate, inquire, explore, discuss and creatively express diverse ideas, perspectives and dynamics. Giving individuals, groups, and organizations frameworks to understand the intrapersonal and interpersonal cultural dynamics and challenges at play is crucial to initiating change processes on all levels.

For this applied project, my goal was to align learning objectives with the personal values of each participant. Incorporating elements that allow students to bring in personal experience was crucial in allowing them to apply learnings directly and better understand how culture is at play within the context of their own understanding of personal leadership. For me as a facilitator, my philosophy was to speak directly to my own biases and power dynamics in real time and throughout each of the personal reflection elements. I sought to work through the activities from my own standpoint and describe the parallel process of unpacking the cultural context as a white female facilitator entering an international workshop space. The perspective that I desired was that of a neutral onlooker, to address both my cultural assumptions and individual leadership tendencies from a blatantly honest standpoint. In doing so, many biases and assumptions were

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indeed revealed, and I left yearning to understand more about how to provide spaces for others to approach challenges or undertakings similarly. Throughout the process of developing my applied project, I discovered that the root of my interest in creating curriculum in cultural leadership comes from the struggle to craft an approach for making sense of institutionalized injustice and exclusion, and the unwillingness to acknowledge privilege and entitlement. I realized that my intersectionality and understanding of self is the driving force behind why and how I developed the curriculum, and how philosophical and theoretical perspectives might guide in the interpretation of findings.

Methodology & Methods

The study conducted was presented through an immersive pilot workshop, which was derived from original curriculum, content and evaluations. The pilot was conducted with an emphasis on experiential learning and personal reflection. The unit of analysis is the individual participating within the context of an inductive applied project, with concrete theory guide the curriculum. In addition, facilitation style and presentation of the theory has also played a factor in expanding the scope of overall impact.

Working with a blend of adult learning andragogy, experiential learning components, and cultural theory to ground the activities, two and a half hours' worth of curriculum was derived. The experiential activities centered on group relations, role recognition and cultural comparison with regular debrief discussions, personal reflections, and various worksheets collecting real time feedback, data, and evaluations. The inductive approach was then applied in an interactive group setting, with each activity used as a discussion piece to debrief the takeaways on a deeper level. The overall intent of the workshop was to elaborate on specific leadership themes in relation to culture, which led to linking the choice of these methods to the workshop outcomes. This led to

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review the andragogy and practicality of learning concepts and create ways to engage that were more engaging than simple didactic or lecture-based traditional methods.

Background and Context

The workshop was held for two and a half hours at Tecnológico de Monterrey (Tec de Monterrey or Tec) - Santa Fe campus in Mexico City, Mexico. The program was held from 9:30am-12:00pm on Monday, March 26 during Santa Semana, or Holy Week. Santa Semana is a widely known holiday week for all of Mexico, and we were surprised to receive an over capacity group of 27 students for the workshop; original plans to accommodate no more than 20 students.

Tec de Monterrey is an internationally recognized private university system in Mexico, and the Santa Fe campus is located in one of the more affluent neighborhoods in Mexico City. Multiple campuses are located across Mexico, and Tec has a reputation for being one of the most competitive and well-known institutions in the country. Tec is also known for promoting courses in unique fields of study such as social entrepreneurship, innovation, and leadership studies.

The workshop official title was as follows: Exploring Intercultural Leadership Identity: Exploring leadership perspectives, identity, and dynamics through intercultural and group comparisons. The workshop objectives were as follows: To analyze and unpack leadership perspectives, identities, and dynamics; to explore conscious and subconscious exertion of roles, leadership, and authority; to create awareness around systems thinking and cultural influences surrounding leadership perspectives; to establish foundation for moving forward with individual leadership identities.

Participants

The population of participants was described to be from predominantly from affluent or upper middle-class families from the greater Mexico area and with bilingual ability. We were

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met with this exact demographic, with all but one being native born Mexicans from Mexico City. The one outlier was originally from Venezuela, now studying in Mexico City. The 27 undergraduate students were in their second year, and each pursuing leadership and entrepreneurship majors or minors. The invitation was sent out to select leadership and social entrepreneurship courses, with students receiving extra credit and a supplemental certificate of completion for participating.

Methods of Collecting Data

The methods of collecting data were conducted through:

- Direct observations and reflections from participants
- Direct observations and reflections from facilitators
- Feedback from Dr. Cris Bravo, organizing professor at Tecnológico de Monterrey
- Feedback from 10-question evaluation survey, almost all participants completed

Methods of Analysis

The primary method of analysis of the data mentioned above was done through coding and counting feedback themes, topics, and mentions of impact and satisfaction. Understanding the major learning points and alignment with the identified learning objectives of the workshop will allow for revisions and/or additions to the curriculum in emphasizing scale, scope, and impact. The depth of learning can also be deciphered based on the method of coding and counting during the analysis process.

Perspective from Leadership Theory and Approach

The leadership theories used inclusive leadership, transformational leadership as well as adaptive leadership because of their direct application to the workshop as well as the preference of the practitioner. The inclusive part is an extremely personal aspect of the practitioner's core

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values as a leader and is inherent in anything created for such exploratory subjects such as intercultural communication and leadership identity. The complex and intricate nature as well as it having deeply personal impact on the participants, it presents a requirement for the facilitators to create a “safe” container for said exploration to take place. The inclusionary spin on this subject matter directly relates to the idea of a safe place. In order for the participants to feel comfortable sharing personal experiences, information, creating a place where all ideas and voices are included is essential. This also relates to the diversity of ideas that provides the richness to the subjects and debrief sections. Based on the adult learning theory specifically the experiential aspects of adaptive and transformational leadership were used as a framework for analysis and examples for best practices for the activities. Because of this preference, the emphasis was put on creating a rich experience from which the participants could draw from in the consequential debriefing sections. If the same material was presented with an intention and/or emphasis on terms or theory, the workshop would have taken a different turn and produce a less effective or impactful outcome for the participants. With an emphasis on experience, challenging the assumptions and asking the why question more thought provoking and engaging experience would be produced, as compared with a more traditional dissemination of information seen in other workshops.

Procedures: Basic Workshop Outline

- I. Introductions (5 mins)
- II. Ground Rules (2 mins)
- III. Workshop Outcomes | Why are we here? (10 mins)
- IV. Warm-Up Game - Group Image Representation - (10 mins)
- V. Culture Context Breakdown (25 min)

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- A. Hofstede’s Cultural “Onion” Model - Manifestations of Culture at differing levels of depth
- B. Hofstede & Minkov’s National Culture Paradigm
- VI. Culture Context Breakdown (25 min)
- VII. Word Association Activity (8 min)
- VIII. Word Association Debrief/Discussion (15 mins)
- IX. BREAK 10 min
- X. Role Experimentation Lab (30 min)
- XI. Pitches (10 mins)
- XII. Role Experimentation Lab Debrief/Discussion - (30 min)
- XIII. Leadership Identity Reflection (10 min)
- XIV. Closing (10 min)

Limitations

Some inherent limitations to the study include the fact that it was only conducted once, facilitators had no previous rapport or history with the participants, and the content was limited to one limited theorist and consideration of culture and leadership theory. Other points of limitation include the brevity of evaluation feedback, the limited time and context allotted for evaluation feedback, the lack of pre-program surveying for initial student inventory and grounding, and the lack of follow-up or post-program surveying of workshop impact and application. The follow up reflections that facilitators did happen to provide did not garner any direct responses due to the optional nature of the assignment, which can definitely be adjusted for iterations to come.

The physical distance and geographical limitations in the proximity of Mexico City to the facilitators provided obvious barriers in having limited direct and continued access to students and their learning process. In addition, language barriers and assumed power dynamics of U.S.

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organizers were factors that indirectly impact the overall delivery and communication levels between facilitators and participants.

Limitations to the curriculum theory and content itself are also worth noting. Adapting current cross-cultural theories, such as Hofstede's onion model, to modern audiences such as our entrepreneurship and leadership undergraduates in a cross-cultural experiential learning environment comes with lots of room for growth and experimentation, providing apparent limitations in understanding overall alignment with desired objectives and outcomes. In addition, andragogy itself, or adult learning theory, is not culturally based, nor is the root of meaning in its quite literal "leading man" approach assumed to be experiential.

Defined Key Terms

Culture - The integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that depends on the capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations (Trend, 2016).

Cultural Values - A culture's values are its ideas about what is good, right, fair, and just. Sociologists disagree, however, on how to conceptualize values (Trend, 2016).

Experiential Learning - Experiential learning is the process of learning through experience, and is more specifically defined as "learning through reflection on doing". Hands-on learning is a form of experiential learning but does not necessarily involve students reflecting on their product (Knowles, 1990).

Intercultural - something that occurs between people of different cultures including different religious groups or people of different national origins (Hofstede, 1991).

Intercultural Communication - Intercultural communication (or cross-cultural communication) is a discipline that studies communication across different cultures and social groups, or how culture affects communication. is the communication between cultures (Hofstede, 1984).

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Intercultural/Cultural Differences - The differences in rules, behaviors, communication and biases, based on cultural values that are different from one's own culture (Karim, 2003).

Intercultural Experience - The experience of an interaction with an individual or groups of people whose culture is different from your own. (Williams, 2016)

Leadership - the action of leading a group of people or an organization (Northouse, 2007)

- **Adaptive Leadership** - Adaptive Leadership is a practical leadership framework that helps individuals and organizations adapt and thrive in challenging environments. It is being able, both individually and collectively, to take on the gradual but meaningful process of change (Northouse, 2007).
- **Inclusive Leadership** -The courage to speak up—to challenge others and the status quo—is a central behavior of an inclusive leader, and it occurs at three levels: with others, with the system, and with themselves. Challenging others is perhaps the most expected focus for leaders (Boitano, 2017).
- **Transformational Leadership** - Transformational leadership is defined as a leadership approach that causes change in individuals and social systems. In its ideal form, it creates valuable and positive change in the followers with the end goal of developing followers into leaders (Boitano, 2017).

Leadership Capacities – those leadership activities, skills and behaviors that foster effective communication, and motivation furthering the mission and values of a group or organization.

Meaning Making - meaning-making is the process of how people construe, understand, or make sense of life events, relationships, and the self (Trend, 2016).

Ethical Considerations

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There are clear ethical considerations that need to be explored before, during and after facilitating a workshop of this caliber. Because of the complex nature of the content, the multiple levels of competing values, and the associated assumptions on all parties, it is prudent of the facilitators to have a very good foundational understanding of the culture in question. It is also imperative that facilitators know the degree of the larger influences, cultural systems and nuances at play in order to fully grasp and manage the dynamics and emotions present within the room. In particular, since the United States has represented such polarizing political messaging and policy in recent history, it is important to recognize that these historical, societal and organizational contexts are always going to be part any collective consciousness between U.S. and Mexico audiences; whether spoken to or not. These factors are inherent within any present moment or holding environment and will be important indicators for future adaptations based on the manifested behaviors documented through working with these groups in a workshop context.

In the case of this applied project, two U.S. nationals presented a workshop about intercultural communication and leadership identity from the role or position of authority. To acknowledge the power relationship and the effect it might have on the candidness of responses, or the types of voices heard, addresses some of the ethical issues that could arise. Given the experiential nature of the curriculum, the workshop invited substantial amounts of improvised and honest reactions, comments and gestures. This was orchestrated on purpose as a learning strategy in order to extract the most guttural and raw assumptions and ideas to be shared in order to better explore which of those were present and available to dissect as a collective. Naming and speaking to those assumptions that are present can decrease the amount of judgement, apprehension and mental shutdown that can occur when using certain words, phrases or approaches that are triggering and may reside in facilitator or participant blind spots. For

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example, words associated with authority and leadership quickly surfaced and labeled President Trump as triggering and off putting. By taking as objective of a view as possible, a humanist view, the facilitators were able to adhere to the group dynamics without feeling triggered themselves; although it is worthwhile in some cases to speak to those thoughts and feelings as well. As an ethical consideration, extensive training in adaptive and integral leadership theory is highly important for facilitators to practice building skills in emotional intelligence, systems thinking, and group dynamics management. Both facilitators have been thoroughly trained, and encourage others seeking to enter this work to pursue training in order to develop a sincere understanding of the sensitivity to working with groups in cultural and leadership work.

In recent news, immigration, asylum and the present border humanitarian crisis present real world issues and dynamics that are creating communication barriers and difficulties across cultures in Mexico and the U.S. alike. Topics surrounding undocumented immigrants, parents of children who are undocumented, and political correctness with gender fluidity and sexual orientation, to name a few, are necessary subjects to unpack and are the responsibility of the facilitators to address skillfully. For example, because some cultures have very defined gender roles, in order challenge those perspectives, facilitators must acknowledge the cultural norms, but be willing to gracefully challenge deeply held beliefs in order set the stage for productive and potentially transformational discussions. This is the noble feat of culture and leadership work and is why facilitator training cannot be more reinforced and encouraged.

Overall, in order to address potential ethical dilemmas, facilitators must take on the intention to inciting systems thinking and adaptive approaches. With a more inclusionary vision, facilitators will be better equipped to facilitate and manage groups to understand their own cultural influences and values, to analyze and unpack their own unique leadership identities and

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consider all perspectives before making greater social decisions. Focusing on the greater impact that leadership decisions have on a global level can widen the scope of perspective and systems-level thinking and refine capacities for critical thinking and cultivating transformational spaces of inclusivity and positive influence.

Delimitations

The study was narrowed in scope by focusing on a group most readily available to the facilitators, even though these students were aligned in general subject course content and interest. In addition, the workshop was constructed to serve as extra credit and provide students with a certification of completion for participation. Through the personal connections and opportunity that presented itself, this group of individuals was comprised of predominantly Mexican national undergraduate students living in Mexico City. The curriculum was presented in English and from the academic perspective of facilitators raised and graduated within the United States educational system. It was a one-time study with intentions to expand to similar groups in the future, and was bounded in the inductive applied capstone research project approach. Given time constraints, access to students and privacy policies of the university, organizers were unable to gather more specific data on participants. An obvious gap in the workshop was in the decision to conduct it completely in English and not the native language of Spanish that the entire cohort of participants spoke. Because of the lack of Spanish speaking fluency on the part of the facilitators, this may have provided some cultural and language shortcomings in learning objectives or clarity in activity instructions. Having the instructions provided in Spanish may have given better exposition and context to certain learning goals and agenda items but was not included due to lack of time and resources in the translation services needed to construct deliverables clearly and appropriately.

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Interpretations and Conclusions

The interpretations and conclusions found after conducting the applied project were informed from the evaluations of the participants, the self-rated impact that the experience had on the participants. Furthermore, the participant observations of the co-facilitators as well as the two hosting professors added to the feedback we received. Using meaning making as a vehicle to debrief our experience of ourselves and each other the perceptions of both participants and facilitators were examined. The paralleled process with learning was co-creative, open ended and encouraged the participants to engage with the facilitators after the workshop.

The third level of analysis came from coding and pulling out themes from the evaluations and cultural onion model activity to demonstrate the needs for future workshops and similar core values expressed, personal identity markers and impact on the participants moving forward. I was particularly interested in the reflective nature of the evaluations to see whether the participants felt that they learned something new about themselves, and their leadership capacities within an intercultural lens. The adult learning aspects were all represented, but in hindsight, taking a more problem-based approach, as stated in the andragogy theoretical framework would have made meaning making as part of the evaluation process much more fluid.

Overall, the evaluations were positive in nature. 22 out of the 27 total participants gave feedback and 18 out of the 27 agreed to give their onion models to us. Of the participants that filled out the evaluation, more than 90% of the respondents felt they clearly understood the objectives of the workshop. This is considered a huge win due to the fact that we had a significant language barrier. This is a testament to the scalability and scope of how this workshop can be adapted for multiple audiences, or that it can be “translated” to apply to different contexts, subcultures and regions. Taking into account the local jargon, customs and

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norms, would greatly benefit anyone who attempts to do a workshop in a different country, but is especially crucial for anyone who is going to engage with intercultural exploration. There has to be an even greater emphasis on the nuances of cultural images, practices and behaviors to be able to effectively facilitate this type of discussion. Because we were outsiders immersed in a new culture, there was a certain advantage given our position; it gave us a wide angle view of the patterns and behaviors. Having a better grasp on what was considered “mainstream” “traditional” or “pop-culture” in regard to the heroes and symbols section of the workshop would have granted us more access to challenge assumptions and biases. Because this section of the workshop leads into the core values it is an essential transitional piece.

This may have been a cultural norm to praise the visitors, especially those who hailed from the US, a presumably more at least economically powerful country than that of Mexico in global context. Because the level of respect for authority is more highly regarded, this may have been the case, but based on some of the answers to the questions, we can safely assume the respondents were at least somewhat honest about their feelings about the workshop. This also may be a factor due to the power distance Mexico falls much higher on power distance than the United States does.

Themes from the onion model were quite clearly, family, respect, love, responsibility. Almost all of the responses had the presence of either family or love which is an overwhelming pattern across the participants. This is important because it is a representation of what the values were in the room. Because it was a one-time study or focused group, we cannot generalize these values to the broader nation state, however it would be an interesting hypothesis to test. If the workshop were to be conducted again in different parts of Mexico, and the United States, it would hopefully reveal specific nuances and differences between subcultures and

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regions. If there were to be significant overlap in the findings across samples, this could reveal the socially desired values, but further exploration would examine if this is in fact the real values of each.

A surprising result of the cultural value related activities was that a majority of students had a hard time identifying or perceiving their core personal values. When we presented them with the onion model, there were a handful of “ah-ha” moments as students continued to grapple with where certain values were rooted and how they came to be of such importance in their lives.

The amount of time allotted for the feedback forms at the end of the session was somewhat rushed, and this produced some hurried, rushed answers, and some answers were left blank due to a lack of understanding the question.

There were some language barriers as mentioned before, so in the future the facilitators would benefit from reading the questions aloud to ensure understanding of the participants before they were filled out. Language the vehicle of teaching, implications that the workshop was held in English, some of the participants did not fully understand the questions, and we had to adjust and find other ways of explaining our points.

Student Examples listed as “Key Takeaways” for the workshop as a whole:

- “How culture affects our leadership”
- “Practical lesson of leadership”
- “Practice and improve leadership skills”
- “Personal Identity and how culture affects my leadership”
- “Culture is a key to most decisions”
- “Always going to find ourselves in situations/teams with other cultures”
- “How intercultural identity affects your team work”
- “Found areas I need to work on”
- “Leadership Types, influence of environment”

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- “We can all be leaders”
- “Listen”
- “Culture affects identity and leadership of all people”

The predominantly activity-based curriculum allowed for a dynamic flow to the session, with transitions built into the debrief time. Activities were designed with the experiential learning theory in mind and proved to be very valuable to the participants, as they referred to their favored activities as those that prompted them to perform complex tasks within a group context. This provided both a practical and theoretical structure to the day.

Allotted time for an open sharing discussion space which was another mentioned aspect of relevant data for the facilitators. Participation was described as a relaxed atmosphere, many of the participants cited that they felt respected and that they felt comfortable in the space. The words empowerment, confidence and “Creative space” were used specifically. Involvement with participants in the group also described the style of the session as “inclusive”. This is especially validating as a practitioner who strives to this standard in all capacities as a leader.

The evaluations helped define the overall intercultural identity and demonstrated how leadership capacities are bound by culture. By giving first hand experiences we are able to know how they perceived their own experiences. What the participants chose to focus on let us have a better eye into their leadership development journey and what was most impactful for this group. Given the limited amount of time, the facilitators were still able to demonstrate the objectives, and uncover some unknown and unexpected results. The results of more broad applications for participants were as follows:

Broader Workshop Applications

- Awareness around individual leadership identity

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- Identify opportunities to for personal leadership development
- Be able to express, identify, and engage cultural identity dynamics
- Communicate role within system, explain one cannot separate person/identity from culture
- Discover core desires and values that you want out of school, work, and relationships
- Add value in business, management/leadership skills in understanding and communicating cultural dynamics at play
- An understanding of how one interacts, reacts, and navigate groups, institutions, and systems
- Heightened levels of emotional intelligence in regard to intercultural communications

Two other similarly correlated moments of introspection for the participants was the ability to reflect on their leadership within a cultural context. Many of the participants stated they had never before explored their leadership capacities in this context. This was compounded with the fact that many of the participants had difficulty separating their personal identities or values from institutional, familial or otherwise values attributed or portrayed through mass media. This led the co-facilitation team to be more curious about where is disconnect was coming from. If given more time, the team would have liked to delve deeper into this concept.

Reflection

The reflection focused on myself within this situational context, with special consideration of the U.S. and Mexico power relations. It was important to “call out” or speak to the larger systems at play even within the room. To the best of my ability I attempted to use self-as-instrument to dictate the room and tap into the energy, tensions, contradictions and unspoken sentiments. With myself being a native U.S. citizen I came to the situation with my own set of assumptions, biases and mental models and it was imperative for me to speak to these not only in the reflection, but in real time, as they came up for me within the workshop session. This hopefully provided a non-threatening example for which the participants could follow suit.

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The broader relationship between the U.S. and Mexico can be rocky at best and less than symbiotic at most. Contention exists and has existed for centuries. If there is a more effective way to compare cultures, but speaking to an either/or mindset does not completely represent the dynamics at play, the increased need for inter-country cultures, intersectionality needs to be spoken to in order to fully explain the complexities of what comprises culture. The concept of “both and” was used in holding multiple identities and helping others to do so, reach across the aisle, the border etc.

Suggestions for Further Research and Exploration

Some options for future research and exploration include conducting more pilot workshops, lengthening the workshop duration and time frames, incorporating new and subcultures and leadership models and frameworks, and focusing on different topics of social identity, context, and culture. Additions to the workshops and experimenting with the formats will allow for the creation of a results database in comparing learning impact and better understanding of how students are applying cultural competency and leadership skills from this workshop format.

Continuing to conduct this workshop to undergraduate students both in the U.S. and beyond is the most direct opportunity for further research and exploration. Comparing results and pulling out themes from the overall workshop and evaluations will be crucial for further curriculum refinement. Unpacking ways in which the group came to decisions, agreements and meaning-making processes would also help themes and theories of adult learning as curriculum is solidified over time.

It would be ideal to conduct another iteration of this workshop for USD undergraduate students in order to compare the results and findings, highlight varying themes, and examine how

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the languages and value systems might differ. It would be equally exciting to do a workshop of this kind in Tijuana, Mexico and compare results between groups on either side of the U.S.-Mexico border region in this area. Since the curriculum also deals with cross-cultural studies, it would be important to conduct intra-country comparisons to see how values, symbols and other cultural norms are similar or different in their respective locations.

Since culture is a very broad term, it would also be worth exploring it from a more complex set of lenses. In addition to running this workshop with revised iterations, there is another opportunity to adapt this curriculum for different contexts, cultures, and perspectives to expand the scope of cultural leadership learning. Focusing on different cultural dynamics outside of nationality or geographical demographic comparisons, such as sexual orientation, age, gender, race, among others will allow this workshop to expand its reach and applicability. Researching and incorporating more cultural and leadership frameworks to adapt within the experiential learning model provides an infinite number of opportunities to explore the potential of this training ideology.

Due to the 2.5 hour workshop time constraint, we weren't able to conduct all of our workshops and debriefs in full form. In fact, one of our final reflection activities had to be turned into a post-program activity sent out via email. It did not receive much traction given the fact that it turned into an optional personal reflection activity. If given an opportunity for more time, I would have wanted to outwardly share these personal reflections or somehow incorporate them into the program closing. The amount of material we went over could have been expanded to cover 3-5 separate 2-hour sessions. In the future, I could see these workshops expanding for multiple sessions, intensive weekends or semester-based programming to better highlight activities, concepts, reflections and debriefs.

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Overall, this subject has captured my heart and created so many possibilities for future research and exploration. This experience has solidified my interest in cross-cultural leadership work, and I hope to continue to pursue this subject matter for years to come.

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Appendices

1. Workshop Flyer
2. Workshop Slides
3. Workshop Handouts (blank)
 - a. Cultural Onion Handout
 - b. Word Association Activity
4. Participant Workshop Evaluation (blank)

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Appendix 1: Workshop Flyer

**EXPLORING
INTERCULTURAL
LEADERSHIP IDENTITY
WORKSHOP**



TEC - CAMPUS SANTA FE
COMEDOR EJECUTIVO - AULAS 1 NIVEL 3
MONDAY, MARCH 26, 2018
9:30 AM - 12:00 MD

JOIN US FOR A FUN AND IMMERSIVE LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE



**PRESENTED IN CONJUNCTION WITH UNIVERSITY OF SAN DIEGO
SCHOOL OF LEADERSHIP AND EDUCATION SCIENCES**

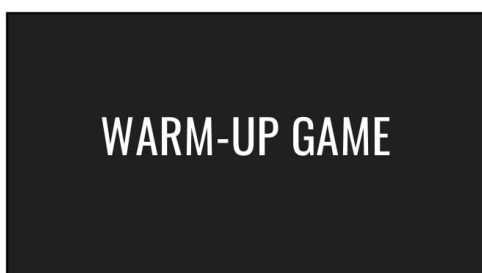
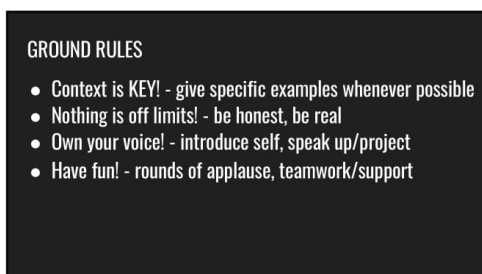
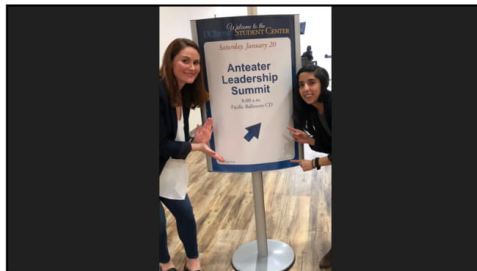
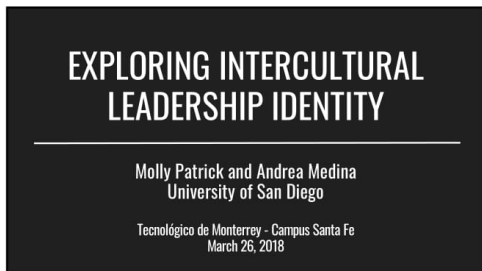
- Create awareness around systems thinking and cultural influences
- Analyze and unpack leadership perspectives, identities, and dynamics
- Explore conscious and subconscious exertion of roles, leadership, and authority

EMAIL CRIS.BRAVO@ITESM.MX TO RSVP

Cris Bravo, Profesor Visitante | Gestión y Liderazgo

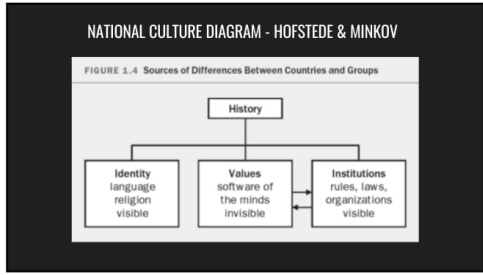
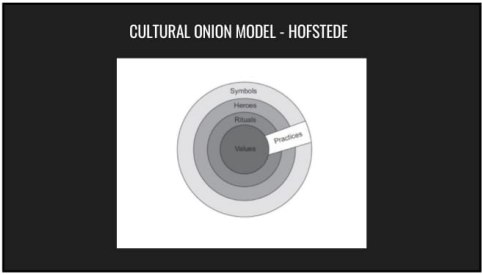
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Appendix 2: Workshop Slides



CULTURE AS A SYSTEM OF SHARED MEANING: EXPLORING INTERCULTURAL LEADERSHIP IDENTITY THROUGH PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Appendix 2: Workshop Slides (continued)



WORD ASSOCIATION

2 GROUPS

- Mexico
- U.S.A.

Select 1 group member to record answers

- Leadership
- Authority
- Entrepreneurship
- Innovation
- Role
- Organization
- System
- Culture
- Family
- Identity
- Values
- Success
- Failure
- Responsibility

DEBRIEF/DISCUSSION

EXPERIMENTAL LAB CHALLENGE

Socially conscious fast food chain

- 1) Name
- 2) Concept
- 3) Mission
- 4) Core Values
- 5) Designate roles (everyone must have a role)

25 mins to ideate and create your proposal
5 mins to pitch (as group - every person must have a role)

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Appendix 2: Workshop Slides (continued)

PITCHES

ROLE EXPERIMENTATION LAB DEBRIEF/DISCUSSION

CLOSING TAKEAWAYS

- How can we better examine ourselves more deeply on a cultural level?
- How do we learn to better authorize ourselves as cultural leaders?
- How does culture affect our leadership identities?
- What are you interested in further exploring in relation to your own leadership identity?
- What leadership goals do you have for the future?

GRACIAS - THANK YOU

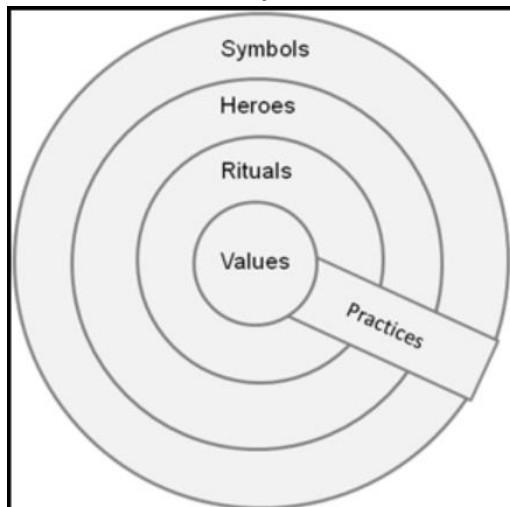
Molly Patrick
epatrick@sandiego.edu

Andrea Medina
andreamedina@sandiego.edu

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Appendix 3A: Workshop Handouts - Cultural Onion Handout

Fill in your Onion



Symbols are words, gestures, pictures or objects that carry a particular meaning which is only recognized by those who share the culture. The words in a language belong to this category, as do dress, hairstyles, Coca-Cola, flags. New symbols are easily developed and old ones disappear.

Heroes are persons, alive or dead, real or imaginary, who possess characteristics which are highly prized in a culture, and who thus serve as models for behavior. Examples are Snoopy in the USA, or Asterix in France.

Rituals are collective activities. They are not actually needed to achieve a goal, but are considered absolutely essential and necessary by the members of a culture. Because of that, they are performed for their own sake. Ways of greeting and paying respect to others, social and religious ceremonies are examples. It is the way you shake hands (if you do), the way you serve tea, the formula at the beginning and end of a letter, how you give a present, a business card,

how you invite people and how you visit those who invited you.

Symbols, heroes, rituals can be seen, heard, felt, tasted or smelled. An outsider can observe them by paying attention to the practices of a culture. How do people dress? Who do they talk about? How do they behave?

The core of a culture is formed by values.

Values are ideas that tell what in life is considered important, and they are among the first things children learn. Because they are learned so early in our lives, we are often unaware of our values. Describing or discussing them can be difficult, and outsiders cannot directly see them. They can only watch the symbols, heroes and rituals of a culture and try to guess what the values – the inner core – are.

Identify at least 3 aspects of each of the categories:

Symbols

Heroes

Rituals

Values

Personal Identity

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Appendix 3B: Workshop Handouts - Word Association Activity

WORD ASSOCIATION

Leadership -

Authority -

Entrepreneurship -

Innovation -

Role -

Organization -

System -

Culture -

Family -

Identity -

Values -

Success -

Failure -

Responsibility -

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Appendix 4: Participant Workshop Evaluation

EXPLORING INTERCULTURAL LEADERSHIP IDENTITY

Workshop Evaluation | March 26, 2018

- 1) What are some key takeaways from this workshop?

- 2) What was your favorite part of the workshop? Why?

- 3) What was your least favorite part of the workshop? Why?

- 4) What are areas of where the facilitators can improve in making this a more effective workshop for you?

- 5) Do you feel like you clearly understood the workshop purpose/objectives? If not, why?

- 6) What workshop topics would you like to see explored in the future?

- 7) Would this workshop have been different if it was facilitated in Spanish? Why/why not?

- 8) Other thoughts/comments?