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Inroads to Outrounds: A Hofstedian Approach to Newcomer Integration into the Culture of Forensics

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This study examines how newcomers to forensic competition in intercollegiate forensics integrate themselves into the larger community of competitors. Specifically, this study takes an intercultural approach and frames the forensic organization as a culture unto itself into which new arrivals must assimilate. To shed further light on this culture, this study determines where members of "forensic culture" are positioned on Hofstede's cultural spectra. By modifying Hofstede's original Values Module Survey and administering it to current competitors from around the country, insight can be gleaned into the cultural attitudes of the forensic organization, and the values that guide the practice of forensic culture. In light of these attitudes and values, suggestions for coaches to help their novices feel more at ease in collegiate forensics are offered.

"*Voici vos bagages. La porte est là. Au revoir.*" His manner was insulted and dismissive; he practically hurled my luggage out of the trunk of his taxi to the curb. Before I could mutter an "au revoir" in reply, he got back into the driver's seat of the cab, slammed the door and sped off. Ten minutes earlier, I had committed one of the cardinal sins of politeness in the French language: I had addressed the taxicab driver taking me to the airport using the informal version of "you," instead of the formal version. Obviously, this distinction does not exist in English, so it was a mistake I was even more prone to commit thanks to my status as an Anglophone. Throughout my stay in France, working as an English teacher in a French high school, I took great care before addressing anyone to make sure the "you" coming out of my mouth was appropriately formal, especially after receiving a death glare a week after arriving in France from a clothing store attendant whom I accidentally addressed as *tu* instead of *vous*. A hurried apology saved my reputation in that instance, but I had been in such a rush to get to the airport on time that I hadn't minded my pronouns when I told the cab driver my destination. During the car ride, I wondered why my few attempts at chit-chat and observations about the weather were blocked with gruff one-word answers or simply ringing silence. I had written him off as an unfriendly driver, when it suddenly hit me, as I was staring at the back end of his cab zooming back into traffic: I was the one who had been rude, not him.

Tales of study abroad are rife with similar stories of miscommunication. Suddenly finding oneself in a new communicative and cultural environment can produce a sense of disorientation that often results in gaffes where the newcomer feels dramatically out of place. Simple study abroad experiences can instill a notable feeling of culture shock, to say nothing of the dramatic sense of displacement immigrants and others forced into a different cultural milieu must work to overcome in order to function in their new society. The process of

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acculturation is studied by scholars from many different angles: from a cross-cultural perspective (Berry, 1970; Kim, 2001, 2005; Samovar, Porter, & McDaniel, 2007; Semlak, Pearson, Amundson, & Kudak, 2008); from an organizational perspective (Gibson & Papa, 2000; Hess, 1993; Jones, 1986; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979); and through the lens of performance (Amaya, 2007). Based on my own experiences, I offer one more setting where these phenomena play out: the world of forensics.

The activity of forensics has been framed and studied using a wide variety of definitions and lenses. Some scholars view forensics as a laboratory, an intensified communicative atmosphere removed from the so-called real world, where participants can try out and receive feedback on a number of communication strategies (Dreibelbis & Gullifor, 1992; Friedley, 1992; Harris, Kropp, & Rosenthal, 1986; Swanson, 1992a, 1992b; Zeuschner, 1992). Others view forensics as an organization devoted to a common goal, with rules (both written and implicit) to which members must adhere in order to experience successful integration into the collective (Croucher, Thornton, & Eckstein, 2006; Friedley & Manchester, 2005; Rowe & Cronn-Mills, 2005). However, my experience as both a forensic competitor and coach has shown me the utility of another metaphor: forensics as *culture* (Miller, 2005; Paine, 2008).

There are many reasons why studying forensics through a cultural lens is justified and important. The world of competitive forensics is fraught with unwritten rules and social norms (Paine, 2005), as well as an extremely specialized jargon (Parrot, 2005) to which participants must adhere in order to experience full assimilation and integration into the activity. Encounters with these explicit and implicit barriers to cultural assimilation are experienced by immigrants to a new country, as well as by novices to competitive speaking. Framing these experiences of initial distress, slow adjustment, and eventual integration as a primarily cultural process yields profound insight. For example, Komisarof (2006) used Berry's (1997) theoretical lens of cultural assimilation to study how new teachers integrate into the JET program, an organization for teachers of English in Japan. Using an intercultural approach, instead of a strictly organizational one, yielded numerous positive acculturation outcomes for newcomers to the JET organization, such as a decreased sense of alienation. Similarly, Mak and Chui (2013) took a cultural approach to how newcomers integrate into daily life of a major corporation. Intercultural concepts of acculturation and assimilation can complement the study of principles of integration that are normally the domain of organizational communication.

Moreover, this study sheds light on the diverse application of the concept of culture, especially to groups not defined by nations or races. Many definitions of culture that are widely accepted by the intercultural community (Cargile, 2005; Gudykunst, 1997) leave ample room for concepts such as *gay culture, teen culture, online culture,* and innumerable others. A study rooted in principles of intercultural communication that examines "forensic culture" further illuminates the relevance and applicability of cultural precepts. Likewise, a look at assimilation and cross-cultural adaptation to a community where these principles are not usually applied deepens our theoretical understanding of the phenomenon.

However, the primary catalyst for this study is an article written by Paine (2008) in the Conference Proceedings of the National Developmental Conference on Individual Events, held in the summer of 2008 in Peoria, Illinois. In his piece, "Etic vs. Emic Values in the Culture of Forensics," he frames forensics as a culture by examining the *values* to which the community appears to adhere. Paine ferrets out these values by applying Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions to forensic culture. These dimensions include individualism vs. collectivism, high vs. low power distance, high vs. low uncertainty avoidance, and masculine vs. feminine. Paine asserts the "forensic culture" is highly collectivist, displays high uncertainty avoidance, exhibits high power distance, and falls somewhere in the middle

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between masculine and feminine. While Paine has been involved in forensics for decades, he did not provide any empirical backing for his positioning of forensics within Hofstede's dimensions. In the conclusion of his essay, he calls for further quantitative and qualitative studies to examine the issues he is only "scratching the surface of," and that is precisely the kind of study presented here. To that end, the following research question was investigated:

> ***RQ1***: Do forensic competitors display the same cultural behavior with regard to Hofstede's spectra as Paine (2008) suggests they do?

Additionally, a primary goal of this study was to examine the acculturation process that newcomers undergo to integrate themselves into the forensic organization. It stands to reason that the longer a competitor is in the activity, the more they will have absorbed the values of the community. This leads to a second question:

RQ2: Do the number of years involved in forensic activity determine where an individual competitor stands on Hofstede's cultural spectra?

However, this study aims beyond simply a check against Paine's (2008) assertions. Munz (2007) posited that knowledge of a target culture's values vis-à-vis Hofstede's spectra can greatly aid a "sojourner" to that culture in successfully integrating. Therefore, implications and suggestions for coaches to help their forensic competitors successfully adapt to their new forensic environment will be explored. A review of relevant intercultural and organizational literature is provided. Once results are reported, how coaches can use these results to help their novice competitors feel more at ease in collegiate forensic competition is discussed.

Review of Literature

Culture

Cargile (2005) pointed out the difficulty involved in pinning down the concept of *culture* with a definition, noting:

> Culture is likely both the most and least useful construct that communication scholars employ regularly. Academics and laypersons alike rely on the idea to make sense of social behavior. For example, nearly everyone understands the remark, "it's a cultural thing" offered as an explanation for another's unrecognizable actions. Yet, when pressed to clarify what the term means more precisely, people (including academics) generally squirm (p. 99).

Some scholars (Cargile, 2005; Kim, 2005) pointed to Gudykunst (1997) as the premiere intercultural scholar who wielded the greatest amount of influence over the direction of the field during the 1980s, when the communication discipline's definition of culture started to snap into focus. He posited:

> Cultures, conceived as a system of competence shared in its broad design and deeper principles, and varying between individuals in its specificities, is then not all of what an individual knows and thinks and feels about his [or her] world. It is his [or her] theory of what his [or her] fellows know, believe, and mean, his [or her] theory of the code being followed, the game being played, in the society into which he [or she] was born. (Keesing, as cited in Gudykunst, 1997, p. 328)

There is ample room to situate the world of forensics within this definitional framework. Certainly, many participants in the forensic activity could identify concepts and values that they feel their colleagues, as a collective, know to be true and meaningful. Gudykunst (1997) continued:

> We generally are not highly aware of the rules of the game being played but we behave as though there were general agreement on the rules. To illustrate, if we met a stranger from Mars and the Martian asked us to explain the rules of our culture, we probably would not be able to describe many of the rules because we are not highly aware of them. (p. 329)

Forensic scholarship abounds on the unwritten rules and norms of the forensic community (Cronn-Mills & Golden, 1997; Gaer, 2002; Paine, 2005), and many of these "rules of the game" become so embedded in the workings of a forensic tournament that they seem entirely natural – to the point of inexplicability – to an outsider. Thus, it is clear that Gudykunst's cultural framework is a suitable fit for inquiry into the forensic activity.

Values

These assumptions about the world that guide cultural practice – and the beliefs that Paine (2005) ultimately attempted to discover in the forensic world – are referred to in cultural scholarship as *values.* Spates (1983) offered a survey of the evolution of the term as it has traveled from the field of sociology to the discipline of communication. He cited Kluckhohn's (1951) definition as the "primary orienting definition" in the literature (p. 30): "A value is a conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group, of the desirable which influences the selection from available modes, means, and ends of action" (p. 395).

Hofstede (1980), in a study that would later prove seminal to the study of organizational culture and the field of intercultural communication in general, sought to find the link between values and behaviors in organizations around the globe. He studied employees' underlying attitudes about authority, initiative, and group dynamics, and synthesized them into several key cultural dimensions. He distributed his World Values Survey to employees of national subsidiaries of IBM in sixty-four countries. The results of the survey revealed four clusters of traits which Hofstede later labeled "dimensions." They are as follows: 1) Power distance, or "the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions (like the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally." Members of high power-distance cultures expect a great inequity in power between an employer and his/her subordinates, for example. 2) Individualism, or "the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups." Individualist cultures place an emphasis on autonomy, self-direction, and the needs of the self, whereas collectivist cultures promote unity, group loyalty, and the needs of the collective. 3) Masculinity, "versus its opposite, femininity, refers to the distribution of roles between the genders," and consequently, how similar men and women appear in the culture. An elevated masculinity index usually implies a marked divide between men and women, whereas men and women fulfill similar roles in cultures with a high femininity index. 4) Uncertainty Avoidance "deals with a society's tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity; it ultimately refers to man's search for Truth." Individuals from a culture with a high uncertainty avoidance index are often bound by intricate systems of rules and expectations and generally appear to be more absolutist in their worldview. On the other hand, uncertainty-accepting cultures are not as proscriptive in their

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expectations of behavior, and worldviews espoused by these cultures tend to be more relativist.

Acculturation

Berry (1970) proposed a model of four acculturation modes based on how newcomers to a culture retain their identity and customs, and whether or not positive relations with the larger culture are sought by the new arrivals. In this framework, the four modes are: integration (customs are retained and positive relations sought), assimilation (customs not retained, but positive relations are still a goal), separation (customs kept, but with ill will towards the larger culture), and marginality (neither customs preserved nor positive relations with target culture established).

Kim (2005) noted that Berry's (1970) model – along with many others – works under the assumption that cultural assimilation is a "matter of conscious choice individuals make for themselves, and not a matter of necessity" (p. 376). More recent approaches to cultural assimilation take a more postmodern or critical approach to cultural assimilation, zeroing in on issues of systematic oppression and dominant ideologies. One such example is a study by Semlak et al. (2008) of female African refugees to the United States. Utilizing focus group methods, the researchers found the women's acculturation process could best be described as a navigation of a series of dialectical tensions. They felt happy to be in the United States yet acknowledged discouraging challenges to their integration (positive-negative). They also felt the same struggle illustrated in Berry's model of wanting to feel included in American culture and a desire to be separate from it (inclusion-exclusion). The women also reported a great effort to discern which elements of American culture to accept and which to refuse (acceptance-rejection). Finally, the women reported a marked disconnect between their own romanticized version of American culture and reality (real-ideal).

This sense of psychological oscillation has been fine-tuned by intercultural scholars with the concept of the U-curve (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003). In this model, new arrivals to a culture go through a "honeymoon phase" at the top of the U-curve upon first arriving in a new setting. Once the original feelings of euphoria and excitement wear off, newcomers descend down the U-curve into stages of acculturation difficulties, disorientation, and stress. As time progresses, culture shock wears off, and newcomers ascend up the U-curve as they adapt to their new culture and feel more at ease. Finally (and ideally), the newcomer feels comfortably integrated into the new culture and sits at the top of the rightmost end of the U-curve.

Forensics as Culture

Miller (2005) is one of the few forensic scholars to take a distinctly intercultural approach to the study of the forensic organization. In his study, he framed the forensic community as a macro-culture with many micro-cultures inside it, naming these regional cultures "a culture within a culture within a culture within a culture within a culture" (p. 4). The variations within these micro-cultures are great enough to instill a palpable sensation of culture shock when one moves across these micro-cultures, a feeling he attests to when he moved from the Northeastern United States to the Pacific Northwest: "While regional forensics communities share a great deal in common due to the broader cultural frameworks within which they exist, the differences…are pronounced enough to present difficulties for an individual attempting to shift from one regional forensics community to another" (p. 4). Miller, using an autoethnographic approach, documents his own journey through Lysgaard's (1955) stages of culture shock as he transitions from one micro-culture to the other.

Paine (2008) also viewed the forensic activity as a culture and guided his analysis using a tool developed by Hofstede (1980). The Hofstedian spectra – individual vs.

collectivist, masculine vs. feminine, high vs. low power distance, high vs. low tendency towards uncertainty avoidance – shed light on the forensic world's cultural values, Paine argued. He posited where the community is positioned on each spectrum and examined which values the forensics world has adopted as a result.

He found forensics to be a highly collectivistic culture, citing several facets of forensic involvement that are a group effort: extemporaneous speaking file building, team sweepstakes points, and peer coaching. The collectivistic nature of forensics is also manifested in its demand for decorum, and unwritten proscription of disparaging another competitor at a tournament. Paine argued that we see a clear value of *professionalism* emerge, as well as an emphasis on *communalism*, an ironic conclusion, he concedes, considering that he is studying the "individual events" side of forensics. Next, he situated the forensics community somewhere in the middle between masculine and feminine. The "laboratory" metaphor for the activity that is so prevalent in forensic literature reveals an ontological assumption of the community: "the idea that there is ultimately one 'right answer' – a 'final Truth,' a Platonic ideal, toward which questing students should strive" (Paine, 2008, p. 84). Such an assumption is found in Hofstede's definition of a masculine culture. Moreover, the importance the forensic community places on *competition* – indeed, without it, forensics as we know it would not exist – also places the activity squarely at the masculine end of the spectrum. Nevertheless, Paine also noted a high regard for *interpersonal relationships* in the activity, as well as a sense of *cohesion* between alumni, judges, directors, and competitors that (while highly collectivistic as well) pushes forensics further towards the feminine pole of the gender spectrum. As for power distance, Paine asserted that forensics as a culture retains a high power distance index, noting wide disparities between novices and "big name" competitors, and between judges and competitors. The value that Paine saw manifested here is *hierarchy*, an insistence on top-to-bottom, sequential ordering that appears in how the culture ranks competitors, differentiates novices from veterans, and breaks ties at tournaments. Finally, Paine looked at Hofstede's uncertainty avoidance dimension. He saw forensic culture as one with a high tendency toward uncertainty avoidance: "the unwritten rules which boundary the activity operate to create a highly structured forensics world" (p. 87), a rigidity valued by high uncertainty avoidance cultures. Paine observed that the community appreciates *standardization* as a cultural value, as a result of its aversion to uncertainty. Paine found this value especially troubling in an activity devoted to critical inquiry, a notion other forensic scholars find equally problematic (Gaer, 2002; Ribarsky, 2005).

Method

First, Hofstede's (1980) original Values Survey Module, which was originally given to employees of the IBM corporation in countries around the globe, was modified. The original syntax of Hofstede's questions was retained, but certain phrases were changed to reflect the organizational structure of a forensics team and not a major corporation. This practice of modifying well-established survey tools has been used to success in research where respondents were still being tested for the same construct, but due to demographic or cultural traits were unlikely to understand certain nuances of some of the questions (Bouldin & Pratt, 1998; Quina et al., 1999).

Because forensic competitors do not – or at the least, very rarely – compete for cash prizes, every mention of "earnings" was changed to the closest forensic equivalent of a quantifiable reward for a job well done: trophies. To preserve the validity of the study, the term "salary" was translated into competitive success with every subsequent mention of earnings. The concept of advancement within a job appeared as the opportunity to hold

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office on a forensics team; in a sense, serving as the team's president is the clearest equivalent to getting "promoted" in a corporate setting. Likewise, "fringe benefits" (as they appear on several of Hofstede's questions) appear in the measure as "scholarship opportunities." Since many teams do not monetarily compensate their competitors, receiving money for competing on a team truly would be a "fringe benefit" in the forensic world. References to managers and bosses were switched to mentions of coaches and Directors of Forensics. If a question referred to a general manager, the term "manager" was replaced with "coach" to signify that the term could be alluding to anyone within the coaching staff. If, however, a question referred to a manager that clearly served as the chief of operations, or was referred to as an "immediate manager," the reference was replaced with "DOF" or "Director of Forensics." In a forensic setting, the DOF often sits at the pinnacle of the decision-making process and often has the most direct control over team practices; therefore, the references to DOFs seemed particularly justified. Finally, references to technological advancements in the questionnaire were simply replaced with the term "innovations." The practices of forensic competition are in a state of tension between adherence to tried-and-true norms, and critical analysis of these norms that leads to innovation (Gaer, 2002; Ribarksy, 2005).

The modified survey was uploaded to an online survey website, the link to which was then distributed by email over a national listserv devoted to collegiate forensics. Competitors who subscribe to the listserv were directed to the survey itself, while coaches were asked to provide their students with the survey link. Individual emails were sent to Directors of Forensics in Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, South Dakota, North Dakota, South Carolina, and Florida, asking them to furnish their students with the link to the survey. The survey remained active on the website for two weeks to ensure a large sample size ($N = 120$), and, consequently, strong statistical power for analysis.

Results

RQ1 sought to find out whether or not current forensic competitors situate themselves on Hofstede's (1980) cultural value spectra as Paine (2008) claims they do. Using Hofstede's original study as a guide, Power Distance (PDI), Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI), Masculinity/Femininity (MAS) and Individualist/Collectivist (IDV) indices were computed for the entire body of respondents, treating them as if they were all members of the same culture.

Power distance is calculated using answers from questions that asked survey respondents to what extent they prefer their DOF to be autocratic or democratic. One question, in particular, probed the likelihood that a student would be punished for bringing a complaint to the DOF. Using the formula Hofstede provides, a PDI value of 54.79 was computed. In Hofstede's original study, power distance values were calculated for 53 countries and ranked from highest to lowest. A PDI score of 54.79 would rank the forensic community between 32nd and 33rd relative to Hofstede's original findings (between Pakistan and Japan). Considering there were 53 countries in the original study, this power distance index does not display an elevated inclination towards high power distance. Additionally, the United States ranks 38th on Hofstede's original findings regarding power distance, which implies that forensics, as a micro-culture within American culture, displays a small propensity towards power distance, but not to the extent that Paine claims.

Uncertainty avoidance is computed using answers to questions on the survey dealing with rule orientation, stability, and stress associated with change. Attitudes these questions probe include respondents' levels of tension or stress associated with the activity, how long respondents plan to stay with their current forensic team, and how closely a team's policies

should be followed, especially to the detriment of individual desires. Responses to these questions produced an overall uncertainty avoidance index for the forensic community of 52.75. This score places the forensic community in roughly the same location on Hofstede's original taxonomy as PDI (between 35th and 36th), close to the Netherlands and East Africa. Again, this value is not as high as Paine would have predicted. The United States places 43rd on this ranking, so Paine's claim about forensic culture's tendency towards uncertainty avoidance is slightly supported. However, these findings do not completely reinforce Paine's assertion of a marked aversion to uncertainty.

In Hofstede's original study, individualism and masculinity were calculated using questions on the survey that, after a factor analysis, were revealed to be asking about similar work goals and, consequently, which values these goals manifest. The questions used in these calculations all ask respondents how much importance they place on a given concept, such as family, competitive success, cooperation, team unity, good working conditions, and the division between a competitor's public and private life. Forensic culture, for the purposes of this study, displays an individualist score of 58.14, and a masculinity score of 6.77. The individualism score would rank between 18th and 19th out of 53 in Hofstede's taxonomy (close to Austria and Israel), and the masculinity score a very low 52nd, by Norway and Sweden. The relatively high IDV value runs counter to Paine's contention that the forensic community is a relatively collectivist community, and the remarkably low MAS score reveals a sharp inclination towards femininity, a finding at odds with Paine's stance that the community displays qualities of both masculinity and femininity in its values. When these values are compared to Hofstede's findings regarding American culture, the masculinity findings are thrown into even greater relief; the United States places 15th on masculinity of all the countries Hofstede surveyed. Forensics portrays extraordinarily feminine characteristics when compared to both American culture and the world. As for individualism, the United States sits at the peak of the individualism dimension at number one. Forensic culture, then, does display some collectivist tendencies within American culture, but when put up against the world, does not exhibit marked collectivist traits.

RQ2 asked whether number of active years in the forensic activity changed where competitors stood on Hofstede's spectra. To answer this question, individual values of power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism, and masculinity were computed for each survey respondent. These values were then divided into four groups, based on how many years a respondent competed in the activity, and a one-way ANOVA was run on each index to test for significant mean differences in each value dimension. The results of the analysis were insignificant at $p < .05$ for all four indices: $F_{PDI}(3, 115) = .636$, $p = .593$; $F_{UAI}(3, 113) = .071$, $p = .976$; $F_{IDV}(3, 115) = 1.127$, $p = .341$; $F_{MAS}(3, 115) = .695$, $p = .557$. The mean score for each cultural value did not differ significantly between groups of competitors divided by experience; therefore, position on Hofstede's spectra did not appear to be affected by number of years of experience in the activity.

Conclusion

Forensic Implications

Several implications for the forensic community emerge from this study. Initially, interesting implications are raised by the extremely feminine score from the survey results. Competition is considered by Hofstede to be a distinctly masculine value, yet how could an activity that is established on the concept of competition register as so averse to it, at least in a Hofstedian paradigm? Perhaps a more feminine conception of competition is necessary to understanding this finding. When students are focused on crushing the competition, they cannot really prioritize getting to know their opponents. Competitors who successfully

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integrate into the forensic culture, then, may have a less masculine predilection towards domination, but instead display a more feminine desire to uphold interpersonal connections and the needs of the community. Indeed, Paine points to "interpersonal relationships" as a cherished value of the forensic community, and these quantitative results seem to bear this out. Those who have successfully assimilated into the community appear to be those who are able to manage the duality of wanting to win and respecting and enjoying the people around them.

The power distance results highlight a tension that Paine himself points out in his 2008 article. It is evident to anyone who has been to a forensics tournament that the forensic community displays a marked predilection towards power distance: the difference in attire between competitors and judges, the emphasis on politeness and decorum, and competitors asking to be excused before they leave a round in which they are double-entered are all hallmarks of a high power-distance atmosphere. Paine indicates this tendency by naming "hierarchy" as a central value held close by forensic culture. However, he offers "cohesion" as a second value, pointing out the high degree of camaraderie exhibited by coaches, students, graduate students, and directors alike. This emphasis on a cohesive community may serve to mitigate the effects of a high-power distance atmosphere and may account for the small PDI score from the survey. Many students perform and debate for the same community of judges from tournament to tournament, and grow close to them as a result. This effect is reinforced when a competitor immediately enters graduate school at the end of their undergraduate competitive career, and students find themselves speaking in front of an ex-opponent whom they now consider a friend. So, while forensics culture certainly displays external instances of high-power distance behavior, the close-knit nature of the community may decrease the level of actual power distance present. Moreover, while these quantitative findings seem to contradict Paine's claim regarding elevated power distance in the community, they reinforce his assertion of the dual values of "cohesion" and "professionalism" working in tandem within the community.

The pronounced bent towards individualism is also intriguing and may have implications for the results of RQ2. With no mean difference between first-, second-, third-, and fourth-year competitors in their position on Hofstede's spectra, we do not see a fundamental shift in competitors' cultural attitudes (at least as Hofstede frames them) the longer they remain in the activity. We could say that students' reported sense of individualism is what contributes to the lack of change in their cultural attitudes as time progresses. On the other hand, if there are no mean differences between competitors' scores, one could also argue that students' cultural attitudes have already coalesced around a given trait, especially within that first crucial year of competition. The individualism/collectivism dynamic is, as Paine (2008) notes, an extraordinarily complex one, and future research into how this dynamic manifests itself in forensic culture is warranted.

Finally, the unexpectedly low uncertainty avoidance score may be an encouraging sign for Paine (2008) and many others who note the forensic community's bent towards standardization. The forensic community certainly has a number of unwritten norms to which competitors are encouraged to adhere, and competitors undoubtedly have been penalized unjustly for working outside of those norms. However, the low uncertainty avoidance score hints at competitors' willingness to try new approaches and methods, and this creativity could serve to help the "unwritten rules" of the activity to become less of a structuring force.

Clear directives to coaches and directors of programs also emerge from these findings. Coaches could take the cultural metaphor of forensics out of the abstract and directly share with their students the phenomenon of culture shock and the U-curve. If students are able to name the apprehension they feel at the outset of their competitive career,

they may make more distinct steps toward climbing up the U-curve out of their initial distress. Also, coaches must walk the oft-repeated line between allowing a student to pour their own identity into a performance, and ensuring that said performance will have a chance to do well in competition. Explicit instructions about the norms of the forensic world may be useful in this arena. A student who wishes to perform in oral interpretation an overdone work of literature may do well to hear that the forensic community places a cultural value on novelty in oral interpretation, and can be directed to find a newer work of literature that displays the same qualities that drew the competitor to the work in the first place.

Coaches can also cultivate an attitude of low uncertainty avoidance in their students by encouraging them to try new approaches to traditional events. The dialectical approach employed by Semlak et al. (2008) provides a helpful frame to approach this conversation with students. To aid in their acculturation and integration into the wider community, students should speak on topics and literature that hold meaning to them, while also working within the confines of the "rules of the game." How much the student wants to respect or break any unwritten norms of the activity should be a conscious decision made by the student and aided by the coach. This way, their performance is as authentic to the student as possible, and this authenticity will help the student feel more at home in forensic culture.

Finally, coaches can help their students acculturate to collegiate forensics by encouraging the dual-minded approach to competition discussed earlier. The drive to win must be tempered by the need to uphold the cultural value of "cohesion" Paine (2008) indicates. Students who are able to balance their internal competitive drive with the need to forge strong interpersonal connections are likely to find a healthy integration into the forensic community.

Intercultural Implications

This study first and foremost emphasizes the utility of applying the lens of culture to levels more specific than a national one. Culture exists in varied forms on many strata; Gudykunst's (1997) conception of culture as "the game being played" and "the code being followed" and Hofstede's (1991) metaphor of the "software of the mind" hint at the ubiquity of culture's influence. The more we are able to study this pervasive phenomenon, the more we are able to shed light on the totality of human communication.

This study also hints at the prominence of the concept of *identity* in the acculturation process. Even when not moving across cultures, communicators are in a constant state of identity negotiation, and this identity construction undergoes even more stresses during cross-cultural adaptation. Outward actions and words form only the tip of the identity iceberg, and if we are to understand acculturation better, we must focus on research and techniques that delve into issues of identity negotiation. Amaya (2007) shows how the construction and subsequent performance of identity determine nearly every other factor in communication and acculturation. Ultimately, it is how successfully one is able to balance one's identity between the old and the new culture that predicts the success of the acculturation. Studies of acculturation must focus on the construction of identity in order to reveal the most profound insights into the assimilation process.

Returning to the notion of "balance" in the discussion of acculturation, note that in many narratives of acculturation, the newcomer must negotiate a tension between two poles. For newcomers to a new country, they must balance their expectations of what the target culture is like and what they actually come to experience. In a coaching career, one must balance one's perceptions as a coach and the needs of the students. The forensic community itself exists in a state of tension on many spectra: the struggle between competition and education (Burnett, Brand, & Meister, 2003), between innovation and adherence to tried-and-true precepts (Ribarsky, 2005), and between individual and group identity (Rowe & Cronn-

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Mills, 2005). The preponderance of these binaries argues for the efficacy of dialectical theory in shedding light on the acculturation process. Semlak et al. (2008) used the concept of dialectics to great success in their study of cross-cultural adaptation; this theoretical approach offers singularly useful insight into acculturation on many levels. Newcomers to a culture must manage the dialectic of excitement and disappointment, of feeling accepted and feeling rejected, and of deciding which values to accept and which to reject. Models of acculturation like the U-curve display a sort of psychological oscillation; the theory of relational dialectics could shed more light on this vacillation and give it a stronger theoretical basis.

While a dialectical approach to acculturation could yield many useful insights, when culture itself is examined with a tool like Hofstede's – a measure that situates an entire culture within a network of binaries – limitations start to appear. Hofstede's value dimensions are reductive in that they essentially force respondents to "pick sides." It is entirely possible, even likely, for an individual to exhibit a collectivist reaction to one stimulus and an individualist response to another. A dialectical approach to the acculturation process is relevant and valid, but reducing culture to a system of binaries cuts out a middle ground that many individuals inhabit.

Limitations

This study does display a few limitations in its methods. First, the modification of Hofstede's survey could have skewed the validity of the instrument when applying it to the forensic world. For example, one factor that contributes to the computation of Hofstede's uncertainty avoidance index is a question which appears on the original survey as "How long do you think you will continue working for this company?" Though this question was modified to ask how many years a respondent has left in the activity, students at a university are unable to stay in their positions indefinitely. Therefore, there is a natural cap on how long a student can stay associated with the forensic association, a fact that could have contributed to a decreased UAI score. Likewise, questions that were specially altered for the purpose of this study ended up being instrumental in computing other cultural dimension variables. Also, the respondents self-selected to participate in the survey, which means they may have more pronounced attitudes towards forensic culture that may have incorporated more outliers into the population sample.

Future Directions

I must mirror Paine's statement that this study "only scratches the surface" of cultural dynamics within the forensic organization. Other directions for this style of inquiry into forensics could include research into attitudes about acculturation held by coaches within the organization. Interview research with coaches that delves into how they train their students for assimilation into forensic competition could reveal interesting similarities and differences with the themes uncovered in this study. Also, research on students from large, "powerhouse" teams on the circuit, teams capable of having many micro-cultures within their own over-arching team culture could prove illuminating. Students on these teams may find themselves undergoing a double acculturation process, both into the massive culture of the team itself, and into the forensic community as a whole. Additionally, these powerhouse teams constitute a micro-culture within the forensic macro-culture, and as Cronn-Mills and Golden (2007) point out, it is the competitors from these successful teams that establish many of the unwritten norms that develop in competition, illustrating perfectly the cultural phenomenon where one dominant micro-culture establishes the values of the macro-culture that encompasses it. Research into these forensic cultures could shed light on questions of

team dynamics, power distribution, and the hierarchy of status within the entire forensic community.

Finally, a study that uses the lens of relational dialectics could illuminate additional issues of acculturation within the forensic organization. Semlak et al. (2008) propose useful examples of dialectical contradictions experienced by new cultural arrivals: positive-negative, inclusion-exclusion, acceptance-rejection, and real-ideal. Further research could evaluate the utility of these pairs in the forensic arena, and provide new ones, as well. By directly examining the various dialectical tensions that both newcomers and veteran competitors must navigate, a researcher could provide yet more insight into the assimilation process that newcomers undergo, as well as understanding of the interplay between interpersonal and intercultural communication.

I eventually caught my airplane that day in France when I offended my taxi driver. To continue (and hopefully not belabor) the travel metaphor, my involvement with forensics has taken me to the most fulfilling destinations of my academic career, as an undergraduate competitor, a graduate assistant coach, and eventually, DOF of a team of my own. Any research we as scholars can offer into this community rife with opportunities for newcomers is warranted and important. All aboard and *bon voyage.*

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