DECOLONIZING CROSS-CULTURAL RESEARCH: A CASE FOR NATIONAL HETEROGENEITY AND THE CONFIGURED CULTURE FRAMEWORK

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Abstract: Scholars have noted that national culture is heterogeneous (i.e., composed of multiple subcultures) and changes over time. Yet, a system that captures and represents the heterogeneity and change in culture has not been advanced in literature. Attempts have been made to demonstrate the occasion of these important aspects of culture, but none offered a way to capture them in research reporting. Currently, researchers report culture values or cultural dimensions in terms of national scores inadvertently reducing national cultures to monolithic and static phenomena. In this paper, we advance a framework, dubbed the Configured Culture Framework, upon which we relied to propose that: *a*) the heterogeneity of culture should be captured by reporting the relative standard deviation (or coefficient of variation, rσ) of subcultures within a nation, *b*) change in culture should be captured by the percent change of the culture per period (%Δ), and *c*) an average of the subcultures should be used as the country's culture. The authors were motivated by the diversity of cultures found within each country of the world, a fact, which is most pronounced in Africa.

Keywords: configured framework, decolonization, culture, heterogeneity, cultural change.

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INTRODUCTION

National culture is deemed important for a country's competitiveness in the global business landscape. It plays crucial roles in determining the levels of national innovation (Franke, Scott 2008; Shane 1993; Lynn, Gelb 1996; Kafka, Kostis, Petrakis 2020; Steensma, Marino, Weaver, Dickson 2000; Everdingen, Waart, 2003; Sun 2009; Taylor, Wilson 2012), in influencing the political and educational environments within a country, in predicting the social attitudes and relationships of people, as well as in changing of the architectural landscape of a country's physical ecosystem (Nassauer 1995). Culture is an important construct that cuts across many, if not all, disciplines of study. Scholars have often assumed a country's culture to be monolithic, using culture as a national level variable (Hofstede 2011). However, cultural heterogeneity within nations can be severe, leading to countries splintering. As such, Hofstede's work has been called to question because it defines culture based on borders, and does not enhance the understanding of particularities, diversity and richness of national practices (McSweeney 2002).

David C. Thomas (1999) discussed the cultural implications of managing diverse groups and found cultural diversity of groups, the sociocultural norms of members of a group, and groups' relative cultural distance away from each other to have an effect on a group's effectiveness. The study found that culturally homogeneous groups outperform heterogeneous groups in five different categories owing to cultural distance and group perceptions in evaluations. While this study was conducted within the context of work group, broader implications may apply. These results suggest that scholars of national cultures must consider the variations within the countries of study. However, van Knippenberg and Schippers (2007) have pointed out the lack of empirical studies analyzing effects of diversity on work groups and called on researchers to conceptualize diversity as a combination of different dimensions rather than a single dimension.

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Research gap and contribution

The view and treatment of culture appears to remain narrow in the sense that it does not consider the heterogeneity and changing nature of culture or the tension that exists among cultures (Appadurai 1990). This is especially true in the African context where the national borders critical in Hofstede's cultural dimensions were often drawn by former colonial powers. Au and Cheung (2004) have underscored the importance of paying attention to intra-cultural variation (ICV) instead of only focusing on cultural mean. Researchers in international management and multi-level modeling have acknowledged the theoretical uniqueness of ICV and have pled for its use in theory building and empirical testing. Responding to such a call, Au and Cheung (2004) explains the theoretical importance of ICV of job autonomy at the societal level. They also demonstrate

> using secondary data from 42 countries, that the ICV of job autonomy influences organizational and social outcomes beyond the cultural mean of job autonomy. Specifically, the cultural mean and ICV of job autonomy exert different effects on job satisfaction and life satisfaction. The effect of the cultural mean is positive and that of the ICV is negative.

Our analysis advances the conversation by attempting to give future researchers a valid structure to more accurately analyze the heterogeneity of national cultures via the Configured Culture Framework (CCF) and measures this heterogeneity by accounting for the diversity of culture within nations. With regards to the heterogeneity of national culture, one glaring example, which is tantamount to an unintended misleading approach to studying culture, is the assignment of scores as the only means of describing countries, implying each country has a monolithic culture. In this approach, national culture is essentially treated as a homogeneous trait of a group, leading many researchers to use "national" or "country" scores to represent a cultural dimension (Tsui et. al 2007). Suffice it to say that most national culture research tends to

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adopt this simplified view of national culture (Fang 2005). These studies assume, at least implicitly, that a nation's culture is predominantly strong and monolithic. In this view, a culture is internally consistent; the components are coherent and convergent rather than conflicting (Nakata 2003; Yaprak 2008).

Countries: a collection of nation-states

However, within several countries in Africa, key internal variations exist which openly challenge such mono-cultural beliefs and, as a result, casting doubt on the validity of such traditional views. As the most diverse continent in the world, there are well over 3,000 ethnic groups in Africa, contained within 54 countries. While it may be reasonable to assume that countries in Europe are somewhat monolithic given that there are about 80 European ethnic groups contained within 44 countries, it is not reasonable, in our estimation, to use 54 national culture scores to represent over 3,000 peoples. We view the idea of assigning 54 culture scores to 54 nations as colonial, given that Africa's borders today are largely artifacts of the colonial era. Historically, each African group was a nation-state comprising of a people with a common way of life and language. While we begin our discussion with Africa to illustrate this point, the heterogeneity of nations applies to other countries and regions, including the United States, as we will see later in the paper.

Rather than continue with the current approach of studying Africa at the country level, where a score (e.g., a Hofstede's Cultural Dimension) is used to represent all the distinct ethnic groups, we suggest that the research community dive deeper. Going beyond the country level to appreciate the different cultures within each country or accounting for the internal variations within a country would be a research best practice. This is crucial as each African country will have multiple, ambivalent cultural orientations, a piece of knowledge that could be the "missing link" in understanding

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culture's undeniably important role in economic growth, innovation, and well-being of African countries. We advocate a framework, the CCF, for studying African cultures that accounts for the enormous diversity of cultures within African countries and the changing nature of culture.

We further propose that cultural nuance extends beyond mere geographic boundaries. Over time, cultural evolution may occur (Distin 2010). With regards to the changing nature of culture, the same country score is often used to represent a cultural dimension (Tsui et al 2007) over time, even when the nation had experienced large and rapid cultural change. Undoubtedly, using scores is a straightforward way of studying cultural phenomena, but major drawbacks arise with this approach, given that it assumes that culture is static. Hofstede's culture scores for different nations relied on interviews and data collected in the 1960s (House et al 2006). Over forty years later, the same culture scores are still used for each country (see Hofstede 2014, and compare to Fernandez, Carlson, Stepina, Nicholson 1997; Wu 2006). Meanwhile, several countries have evolved and undergone major cultural changes as pointed out by Fernandez et al. (1997) and Wu (2006). This is especially true in the African context, where there have been massive changes since pre-colonial times (Osiri 2020).

Recognizing that values change over time, the World Values Survey (WVS), a global network of social scientists, is studying changing values and their impact on social and political life. This collaboration has accumulated the largest cross-national, time series investigation of human beliefs and values in history, with data including interviews of approximately 400,000 respondents from almost 100 countries, covering 90 percent of the world's population (Diez-Nicolas 2009). WVS data has proved to be quite useful as academics, government officials, students, journalists and many others have used them to learn about the world. Allen et al. (2007) observed significant changes in cultural values and economic development in eight East-Asian and Pacific Island nations. Essentially, Allen et al. (2007) repeated the work of Ng et al. (1982) and

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found that, in 2002, nations with high GDP per capita shifted away from hierarchical values toward egalitarianism. Similarly, researchers found that high-GDP countries shifted away from embeddedness towards autonomy 20 years later (Schwartz et. al. 1999, 2004). Embeddedness is the view of people as entities embedded in the collective whereas autonomy is the view of individuals as bounded entities encouraged to express uniqueness. This paper extends that conversation by providing new insights on decolonizing culture research.

WHY DECOLONIZE CURRENT APPROACHES TO CULTURE RESEARCH?

European colonial governments imposed the African borders that formed the boundaries for today's African countries. In 1884, as the German government developed the thirst for imperialism, her first chancellor, Otto von Bismarck, called for the Westafrika-Konferenz, known as the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885. It was intended to be a sort of a peace treaty for the attending parties, because prior to that, European governments were in frequent conflict over global access to resources. These governments were inclined towards imperialism, and many argue were scrambling for Africa's resources, such as ivory, gold, timber, and rubber. Belgium had moved into Congo; France took control of Tunisia and Guinea; Britain saw it fit to control Egypt to secure its gateway from Africa to India. Fourteen imperial states attended the conference, namely: Austria, Belgium, Demark, Germany, France, Spain, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Russia, Sweden-Norway, United Kingdom, United States, and the Ottoman Empire. They signed the Berlin Act, which paved the way for increased parasitic activity of these imperialist states and the destruction of African life and governance. This is why Osiri et al. (2021) advocate the use of the term "socio-economic parasitisation" (SEP) as an appropriate replacement for "colonization".

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The imperial states carved up Africa, and by so doing forced different African states into one geographically region, which later became a country. In some instances, members of an African state found themselves in multiple regions. For example, the border on the west of present-day Nigeria separated the Yoruba people into "British Nigeria" and "French Benin", as they were called during SEP (colonization), with a majority of the Yoruba people in the former and a minority in the latter. By forcing many ethnic groups into one geo-political area, these African states trapped within a colonized country began to lose their cultural heritage and unique institutional structures. Studying African nations at the country level instead of the ethnic group level, inadvertently continues the legacy of colonization, which undermines the diversity of Africa and the uniqueness of cultures within a country. Our approach, which uses the CCF, proposes that scholars should conduct culture research in a manner that is ethically, socially and historically conscious. We believe that researchers of culture are best suited to lead these efforts by example.

It remains unclear how societal preferences emerged despite history, ecology, technology, and other factors implicated in the process. Undeniable, however, is the fact that globalization is catalyzing social change in unforeseen ways in Africa and many parts of the world. It is often said that before the advent of rapid globalization, cultures, for the most part, were isolated from each other and largely remained intact and somewhat static with very little external influences. This was especially true in the pre-historic and agrarian revolutions. Nevertheless, this is not necessarily the case for Africa, because for centuries, the West and Arabs beleaguered and assaulted Africans on the continent. Between 1500s and 1800s, Western actors enslaved, sold and transported Africans across the Atlantic Ocean to the Americas.

As the enslavement and selling of Africans waned, the West began their scramble for Africa in the few years leading up to the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885. It was not until 1957 that Ghana,

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became the first African country to gain independence from Britain. Indeed, the West has heavily influenced, and in many respects damaged, African culture and institutions. While independence was welcomed as good news, it went under the radar that the African nations were already westernized countries. In other words, imperialist European nations had created and shaped the trajectory of African countries. This is one of the greatest acts of dehumanization ever done to a group of people because, among other things, the way of life of each ethnic group was suppressed or destroyed. Therefore, studying Africa's ethic groups is culturally restorative and preserving while unmasking the rich diversity of cultures within each country.

TOWARD A NEW APPROACH TO CULTURE RESEARCH

In addition to the imperialist assault on Africa which altered the cultures therein (Schwartz 2008), globalization continues to impact and shape African cultures, in part, due to economic trade, foreign direct investments, migration and use of information technology. Each aspect of globalization appears to play significant roles in the cultural landscape of nations and warrant further examination. Social media, for example, has the ability to rapidly influence culture since it enables the spread of information across the world.

Economic trade

Trade, commonly understood as the exchange of goods and services between two consenting parties, is a well-established concept in history and economics. The ability to acquire products, which would otherwise not be available for a variety of reasons, including materials, cost of products, and technology, demonstrates

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how cooperation can have a positive effect on the standard of living. Recent decades, however, have yielded unprecedented international economic agreements, making foreign goods both readily accessible and known. These products carry the exporting country's culture, and these elements of culture are gradually assimilated by the importing nations. Over time, the importing country identifies with the product and evolves to reflect its importance. Global marketplaces and international trade agreements have greatly accelerated this process, making "outside influences" commonplace in national and regional cultures (Dosi, Pavitt, Soete 1990).

Africa continues to integrate into the global economy but at the price of further losing more of her culture. Prieto and Phipps (2019) have also written about the forgotten African American management approaches that are rooted in African principles. Ancient African cultures are being discarded in favor of Western culture or a one-world culture that forces African societies into accepting and adopting a foreign system (Yankuzo 2014). Integration has changed the way the African consumes resources, conducts business and the communal ways that individuals interact with one another. For example, traditional African culture espouses philosophies, such as Ubuntu, Ma'at, Emi Oso Eso and Hatata, which focus on community, justice, character and morals. The embodiment of these philosophies results in a culture that is communal, paternalistic, detached from material goods and using resources as needed (Ntibagirirwa 2010). As homogenization increases, Western philosophies, which tend to focus on individualism, money and power, have slowly replaced African ideals of communitarianism.

Foreign direct investments

Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs) further intertwines cultures by enabling countries to open and invest in businesses outside of their national borders. FDIs allow businesspersons to directly pursue target markets while being compliant with national and local

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regulations, creating an atmosphere in which nations are mutually interested in the well-being of one another. New clientele are exposed to foreign products regularly, and culture-blending may occur depending on the type of FDI (Moran 2001).

FDI is a tool used by those in power to control the economic and political capital of a country. FDI is not a new concept, however, the way it is being used in Africa is predatory (Das 2021). It is also enabling civil, political and economic instability, drain of resources, and lack of infrastructure. In order to garner the attention of investors, many countries have eased the administrative process; privatized resources and are using pro-active investment measures. Odusola (2019) cited that on one hand, it has diversified the economies (e.g. Mauritius), created special economic zones (e.g. Senegal), and improved investments (e.g. Egypt, Tunisia and Zimbabwe), while on the other hand, it has led to weak governments that are unable to provide social and financial returns to the local population. Effectively managing FDI in ways to promote sustainable develop remains a challenge (Bende-Nabende 2017). This has resulted in people losing faith and distrusting their governments, which has caused a shift from a shared community culture to a more individualistic orientation because many are forced into a survival mode and have to fend for themselves without any government assistance.

Information technology

Information technology refers to the system and means by which information is stored. This information spans from historical facts to groundbreaking research, and includes the programs and products used for business. Given the technological advancements of the past few decades and the globalization of economic activities, information is no longer limited to a specific geographical location. This is partly because computers, processors, and means of con-

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ducting business transactions are always improving, and the capability to acquire access is ever growing. Individuals can now learn information from their home what previously was exclusive to a specific organization or group in a specific town, and, this influx of new ideas and technology can influence the behavior of the persons exposed to it. When many people in this same region are exposed to the same idea and are influenced by it, the region's socio-cultural orientation can shift. Means of communication change quickly with the advent of cellular phones, and the same model can be applied to food, automobiles, and accessories to name a few (Híjar, Martínez, Amatller, Sow 2007).

Since these aspects of globalization facilitate human interactions and interconnections, thus influencing how people think of one another and of themselves, in our hypercharged world of global communication, it is easy to see that cultures are changing, some more rapidly than others are. We advocate that cultural researchers should consider these 21st century trends and their impact on culture in their treatment of the subject, particularly in the reporting culture scores such that it captures cultural change as well as its heterogeneity. For instance, the advent of social media has eased the access to new people, ideas and cultures. At the same time, it has given outsiders the impetus to influence and change the views of people who are physically far away from them. As the majority of social media users are the youth, this influence can create a generational detachment from ones indigenous culture.

THE CONFIGURED CULTURE FRAMEWORK

The study of culture has identified numerous intersections of factors that contribute to unique features within a population (Desmet 2017). The study of these interacting factors allows scholars and global leaders to characterize populations (Desmet, Wacziarg 2018). Hofstede developed a popular model describing how the

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factors of culture interact in the late 1960s by studying a global corporation. Tang and Koveos (2008) argued that the Hofstede's framework stands out in cross-cultural research because of its "clarity, parsimony, and resonance with managers". Nonetheless, they echo that Hofstede's indices fail to capture the change of culture over time and offer the argument that new cultural dimensions, different from the Hofstede's framework but unique due to institutional idiosyncrasies, should be considered. Tang and Koveos advanced a model, which incorporates seven institutional factors, namely, language, religion, climate, ethnic heterogeneity, legal system, female labor participation, and Confucianism, to update the Hofstede cultural dimensions. The researchers found individualism, power distance, and long-term orientation to have a curvilinear relationship with GDP per capita, and tend to change over time. Uncertainty avoidance and masculinity were more stable over time. Their updated indices more strongly correlated with the globe values scores (reported in 2006) than with Hofstede's score (reported in 1980), underscoring the relevance of adjusting cultural dimensions with economic conditions over time (Tang, Koveos 2008).

Considering culture's complex nature, it is clear that cultures are heterogeneous and evolving. This especially true in Africa, where not only external factors influence the cultures but the nation-states which have been forced into a country are in constant interaction with each other. Therefore, researchers should take a different approach to the matter by viewing and representing national culture not just as a shared property of a group, but also as a coalesced, yet evolving, property of a group. The Configured Culture Framework (CCF) simply provides a means for scholars to apply existing cultural dimensions (e.g. Hofstede, Globe, et al.) more robustly. Table 1 shows estimated numbers of the different cultures of the world.

Following the view of Schein's (1996), culture evolves as a collective strives to resolve issues and adapt to external threats and opportunities while managing member relations. We propose that researchers should take the CCF, especially when studying African

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Tab. 1. *Shows the estimated number of ethnic groups of the world.*

Continents	N. of countries	N. of Ethnic Groups
Africa	55	>3,000
Antarctica	0	0
Asia	48	~70
Europe	49	87
North America	45	889*
South America	15	350**
Oceania	14	>1,000

Notes: *recognised indigenous peoples in the USA (574), Canada (250) and Mexico (65); **estimated indigenous peoples in South America. Since other groups (e.g., Europeans, Africa, etc. in the Americas are the largest, it is expected the represent them more in the curriculum.

cultures, because each country is comprised of many ethnic groups. Therefore, a country may have multiple, ambivalent cultural orientations that could be the "missing link" in understanding a culture's undeniably important role in innovation as well as other variations within countries. The CCF is unique in that reporting the standard deviation and cultural change allows us to understand national cultures, whereas, past studies inadequately accounted for differing cultural groups within countries.

The core for the CCF is grounded in the idea that culture is heterogeneous and changing and should be studied as such, instead of simply reducing it to nothing more than a homogenous and static entity used to distinguish one group from another. The CCF maintains that a national culture is comprised of different subcultures with differing values and that, while it is possible that one dominant set of values may emerge, the other subcultures or values are not to be overlooked. Given this, countries such as the United States and Nigeria can be better understood as what they are – complex and

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variant – rather than forced to match cultural blueprints based on other nationalities. For example, while there are many regions in the US which exhibit classical individualism orientation, the country cannot be labeled as a homogeneous individualist culture that is devoid of a collectivism orientation. Nigeria, similarly, may be considered a collectivist country, yet this does not mean it does not exhibit enormous subcultural variations.

Subcultural variations may rely on geographic differences (e.g., North and South), religious differences (e.g., Mormons and Evangelical Protestant), cultural differences (e.g., African and European) and so on. These differences within a nation often have negative connotations as they appear to undermine nationalism and cultural inclusiveness, but diversity of nations can be a source of national advantage since the subcultures can offer different strengths to make a nation stronger. Exposure to different life experiences, school systems, and values has been shown to inculcate different productive skills into people. Google stresses putting together work teams with very diverse backgrounds, and they have found that diverse groups can understand their customer base at a much higher level and solve problems in more sustainable ways.

As a result, a heterogeneous team tasked with solving a problem tends to produce better solutions compared to their more homogenous opposites. A diverse team allows its members to approach problems differently, as the members have different interpretations of and mechanisms to solve problems originating largely from birthplace differences (Hong, Hirshleifer 2003). Though other researchers contend that in some situations homogeneous work teams function better than heterogeneous teams and that the complexity of the task could potentially make homogeneous work teams more effective. Even when working across cultures may be challenging and appear to be less effective, diversity can always be a source of peace and beauty, if harnessed with the right mindset.

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A case for diversity

In theory, a cognitively diverse group with a limited pool of skills can outperform a homogenous team endowed with superior skill sets (Basadur, Head 2001). Therefore, all things equal, a country with vast subcultures may indeed have a competitive advantage over more homogenous nations as it can offer companies access to an array of cognitively diverse employees. However, diversity must be harnessed appropriately to yield desired results.

The Spanish culture, having a rich and well-documented influence on world history, is not only heterogeneous, as manifested by the presence of multiple subcultures and languages (e.g., Basque, Castilian, Catalan and Galician) in Spain, but has changed throughout the centuries. Spain was predominantly Iberian before being influenced by the Roman culture (218 BCE-400 CE), the Medieval era (507 CE-711 CE), and Moorish culture (711 CE-1492 CE). Other cultures that have contributed to the Spanish culture include the Celtic, Phoenician, and Jewish. Today, Spain has 44 UNESCO World Heritage Sites (Yang, Lin, Han 2010), the second highest in the world, and, as a testament to its rich culture, is continuing to diversify. The history of Spain illustrates cultural diversity and change, and the beauty that can be gained from such diversity.

Many countries with diverse populations (e.g., China, India, Israel, and Kenya) present unique insights regarding the importance of promoting a holistic approach to study national cultures, which considers both shared and differing values. Truly, every country is heterogeneous and keeps evolving, making it advisable to study any nation's cultures from both the standpoints of the values they share and the differences that may demarcate them. CCF, fortunately, enables these types of studies due to its persistence to view national culture as aggregates of evolving subcultures. CCF strongly advocates that cultures should be studied at the nation-state or ethnic/cultural level, not country level.

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Representing culture scores and capturing cultural change

The CCF views societies as they are, and not as they have been remade by colonization. Studying each nation-state within an African country, for example, is a decolonized approach. However, when subcultures are similar, the configuration of the country's culture is convergent. Conversely, when subcultures are dissimilar, the cultural configuration is divergent. Accounting for variations within a country is important because it allows researchers to decode subculture's effect on the nation's total cultural dimension scores. Scholarly research and popular media make it abundantly clear that conflicts and wars along ethnic lines have resulted from the differences among ethnic groups. Tensions among these groups, which could be or are exacerbated by their differences, are symptomatic of cultural clashes.

According to the CCF, it is entirely plausible that the cultural dimension score (e.g., Hofstede, Globe, or Tight/Loose) may vary depending on the data collection site in the country; the degree of the variation would depend upon the convergence (or divergence) of the subcultures within the country, and this should be accounted for when analyzing the data. To capture the heterogeneity of culture, CCF proposes that country culture scores be reported along with the coefficient of variation as follows:

Cultural dimension score = X (σr) (1)

Where "X" is the cultural dimension score for the nation calculated as the average of the subcultures within the nation, and "σr" is the relative standard deviation or the absolute value of the coefficient of variation expressed as a percentage ($\sigma r = (\sigma/X)*100$, where σ = the standard deviation). The larger the "σr" value, the greater intra-culture variation or degree of cultural heterogeneity within a nation.

To capture cultural change, CCF proposes that country culture scores be reported along the percent change in culture per year as follows:

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Cultural dimension score = X (%Δ) (2)

Where "X" is the cultural dimension score for the nation calculated as the average of the subcultures within the nation, and "%Δ" is the magnitude of cultural change per year calculated as the difference between the first culture score ever reported from the location (X_1) and the most recent score to be reported (X_2) divided by X_1 expressed as a percentage divided by the number of years between the two score measurements.

Until date, the approach to studying cultures that inherently builds in a mechanism to account for cultural differences within and across nations and its evolution has not entered the literature. Here, CCF fills the void necessary to better understand and study culture. Consistent with the view of Schein's (1996), CCF agrees that culture changes as a group strives to resolve issues and adapt to external threats and opportunities while managing member relations. First, when a nation, or a collection of subcultures, is exposed to a new paradigm, certain subcultures may be open to accept the new way of thinking while others may reject the new paradigm altogether. Ultimately, the collective responses within the country may lead either to a cultural convergence of values, making the country's culture more homogeneous, or to a cultural divergence of values, making the country's culture more heterogeneous. This evolutionary trend follows a cyclical nature shown in Figure 1, which suggests that cultures change over time, depending upon the exposures to internal and external influences.

SUPPORT FOR THE CONFIGURED CULTURE FRAMEWORK

Illustration of the heterogeneity in regional cultures

Since subcultures are groups within a larger culture that differ in values and practices from the larger culture, it follows that highly heterogeneous countries are composed of groups that may deviate

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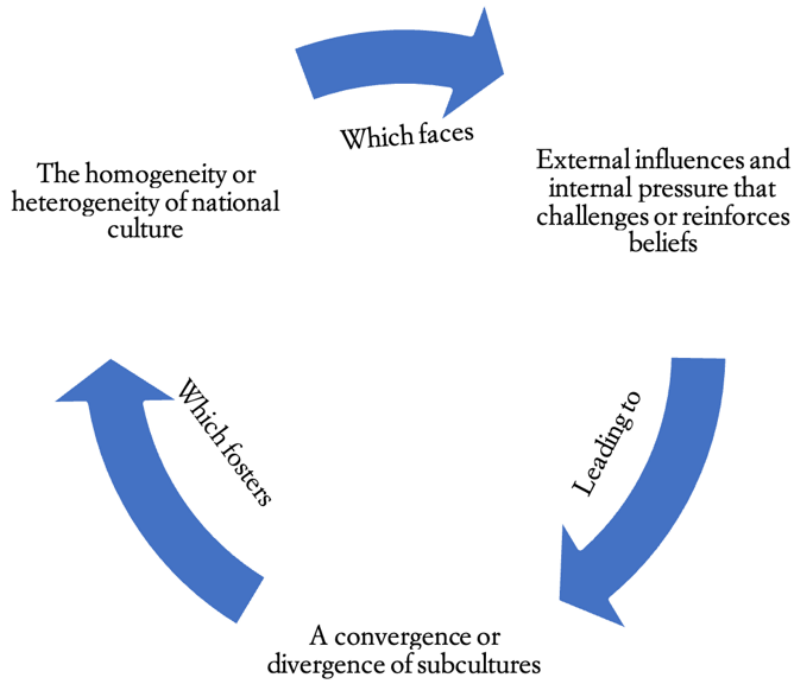

Fig. 1. *An illustration of the how a culture changes over time.*

from the values and practices for which the countries are known for. As such, because subcultures arise from geographic religious, or cultural differences, among other factors, it also seems that heterogeneity would be correlated with these factors. For example, if heterogeneity results from geographical differences, it would be correlated with the size of geographical units selected. This is why, as we would advocate later, it is important to represent each subculture (at least three) in the calculation of a country's culture score.

The Hofstede model has been criticized for assuming homogeneity within each nation (Ghemawat, Reiche 2011). The computation and use of culture scores without accounting for intra-cultural

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variations or the physical distance between countries further exacerbates the error produced by using these scores. As an example, one would expect significant differences in international strategy due to cultural differences if a Spanish firm located in Barcelona versus in Seville began investing in France (Ghemawat, Reiche 2011). Likewise, considering the historical settlements in the US, one might expect differences in culture and in the ways people from the Middle Atlantic (e.g., New York) versus the South (e.g., Texas) or the West (e.g., California) conduct business domestically and internationally. If these instances are true, it is also relevant for Africa, and other parts of the world.

Evidence of heterogeneity from the United States

Historical settlers of the Middle Atlantic were diverse, including English Protestants and Catholics, Swedes and Dutch, and they relied on manufacturing and the exportation of goods early on. Southern settlers, in contrast, were rarely diverse (heavily English Protestants) and relied on farming - especially due to the agricultural-friendly climate. Today, Southerners are still known for their traditional ways and for their hospitality, which suggests that they are likely to be more collectivistic compared to individuals from the Middle Atlantic.

The US quickly became (and remains) a hotspot for immigration after the settlers from Europe invited more settlers from the continent. When acquired by the United States, the US West presented both wilderness and opportunity. In an environment in which adaptation was necessary for survival, diverse cultures quickly learned to coexist and, over time, accept one another. Today, influences of Native, Asian, Spanish, Mexican, and Pacific Islander (in addition to other European influences) are prominent throughout the region where the most defining characteristic is the lack of homogeneity (Kydland 1984; Golledge, Stimson 1987). A comprehensive study, based on the tightness-looseness framework

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Tab. 2. *Fifty US states categorised into six US subcultures based on regional cultural differences.*

Regional subcultures	States within subcultures and their tightness/looseness ranks
The South	Mississippi (1), Alabama (2), Arkansas (3), Oklahoma (4), Tennessee (5), Texas (6), Louisiana (7), Kentucky (8), South Carolina (9), North Carolina (10), Georgia (12), Virginia (14), West Virginia (17), and Florida (25)
The Midwest	Kansas (11), Missouri (13), Indiana (15), Ohio (18), North Dakota (20), South Dakota (21), Nebraska (24), Iowa (26), Michigan (27), Minnesota (28), Wisconsin (30), and Illinois (32)
The Southwest	Arizona (29) and New Mexico (35)
The Mid-Atlantic	Pennsylvania (16), Delaware (22), Maryland (34), New Jersey (38), and New York (39)
The West	Wyoming (19), Utah (23), Montana (31), Idaho (33), Colorado (37), Alaska (40), Hawaii (43), Nevada (47), Washington (48), Oregon (49), and California (50)
The Northeast	Rhode Island (36), Vermont (41), New Hampshire (42), Connecticut (44), Massachusetts (45), and Maine (46)

of culture, of all 50 states in the United States, ranked the US states, with Mississippi (78.86) as the "tightest" US state and California (27.37) as the "loosest" (Harrington, Gelfand 2013). We have classified these tightness/looseness state rankings based on regional/geographical subcultures of the US in table 2.

Using the fifty tightness-looseness culture scores derived for the fifty states, we calculated the range between the largest (Mississippi, 78.86) and smallest (California, 27.37) to be 51.49, which indicates a significant difference in the tightness-looseness cultural dimension between these two US states. The average US tightness of all fifty state cultures score was calculated to be 38.5 (σr = 19.70%), where the relative standard deviation (or coefficient of

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variation), σr, of 19.70% gives a sense of the cultural heterogeneity in the US. A low coefficient of variation (σr) indicates a low degree of intra-regional cultural variation, and a high σr indicates high degree of intra-regional cultural variation. For example, a coefficient of variation of 0% means that the culture in internally homogenous. The average tightness scores for the regional subcultures were calculated to be follows: 65.17 (σr = 13.65%) for the South, 51.47 (σr = 8.99%) for the Midwest, 46.50 (σr = 3.2%) for the Southwest, 45.65 (σr = 13.69%) for the Mid-Atlantic, 39.38 (σr = 21.28%) for the West, and 37.15 (σr = 8.65%) for the Northeast. Table 3 illustrates the regional cultural heterogeneity in the US.

We believe that the heterogeneity within certain African countries are even more significant that what we see in the United Stated. Unfortunately, data is not available to study subcultures within African countries. This area presents great opportunity for research for scholars in cross-cultural studies.

Evidence of heterogeneity from African countries

Using Hofstede dimensions reported for various African countries, culture scores for East and West Africa were calculated as shown in table 4. The coefficient of variation, σr, is also shown to illustrate the heterogeneity within these two African regions. Interestingly, the mean culture scores calculated for East and West Africa do not correspond with those currently reported by Hofstede. We believe that his score may have been obtained as averages or that our set of countries considered for the region does not match his. Nonetheless, the differences in the regional scores does not negate the point that capturing the heterogeneity of reported country culture is an important exercise. As already alluded, much work needs to be done to study the many distinct African cultures and to fully appreciate them.

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Tab. 3. *Tightness/looseness dimensions for six regions of the United States.*

US Regions	South	Mid-west	South-west	Mid-Atlantic	North-east	West
	78.86 (MS)	60.36 (KS)	47.56 (NM)	52.75 (PA)	43.23 (RI)	51.94 (WY)
	75.45 (AL)	59.6 (MO)	45.43 (AZ)	51.02 (DE)	37.23 (VT)	49.69 (UT)
	75.03 (AR)	54.57 (IN)		45.5 (MD)	36.97 (NH)	46.11 (MT)
	75.03 (OK)	52.30 (OH)		39.48 (NJ)	36.37 (CT)	45.50 (ID)
	68.81 (TN)	51.44 (ND)		39.42 (NY)	35.12 (MA)	42.92 (CO)
	67.54 (TX)	51.14 (SD)			34.00 (ME)	38.43 (AK)
	65.88 (LA)	49.69 (NE)				36.49 (HI)
	63.91 (KY)	49.02 (IA)				33.61 (NV)
	61.39 (SC)	48.92 (MI)				31.06 (WA)
	60.67 (NC)	47.84 (MN)				30.07 (OR)
	60.26 (GA)	46.91 (WI)				27.37 (CA)
	57.37 (VA)	45.95 (IL)				
	52.48 (WV)					
	49.69 (FL)					
Mean Score	65.17	51.49	46.50	45.63	37.15	39.38
SD	8.90	4.63	1.51	6.25	3.21	8.38
CV	13.65%	8.99%	3.24%	13.69%	8.65%	21.28%

Note: State scores were obtained from Harrington and Gelfand (2013). SD is the standard deviation, σ, of the Mean Scores and CV is the coefficient of variance, σr, based on the individual state scores. Higher % CVs means greater heterogeneity.

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Illustration of the cultural change

Culture evolves over time because people's beliefs and attitudes change as they become exposed to new information and ways of thinking. As previously alluded to, these changes are facilitated by the elements of globalization. Between 1850 and 1914, approximately 55 million Europeans migrated to North and South America and Australia (Hatton, Williamson 1998), ultimately changing the existing cultures in those regions as the new comers interacted

with the indigenous people. Those interactions resulted in a new culture that is different from both Europeans and the indigenous population.

In recent years, due to massive Mexican immigration, as well as increasing numbers of Hispanics already in the US, as of July 1, 2013, there were about 54 million Hispanics living in the United States, representing approximately 17% of the US total population. However, the US Hispanic population for 2060 is estimated to reach 128.8 million, constituting approximately 31% of the US population by that date (US Census Bureau 2014). This means that the US is currently undergoing a cultural shift and will continue over time. Furthermore, since firms desire to have the capacity to adapt to changing environments (Lewin, Long, Carroll 1999), it would be useful to capture the change in culture over time as this would enable firms to make business decisions and equip develop appropriate business strategies (Thomas 1999; van Knippenburg, Schippers 2007).

In a study of how culture influences rates of innovation, Shane, Piero, and Singh (1998) reported that the strength of the relationship between innovation and two cultural dimensions, individualism and lack of power distance, were stronger in 1975 than in 1980. The result was interpreted to suggest that, perhaps, individualism and lack of power distance are becoming less important in stimulating innovation. Because cultural dimensions are useful metrics that possess predictive properties and can have significant implications

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Tab. 4. *Hofstede Dimensions for East and West Africa Countries.*

	PDI	IDV	MAS	UAI	PRA	IND
East Africa						
Ethiopia	70	20	65	55		
Kenya	70	25	60	50		
Malawi	70	30	40	50		
Mozambique	85	15	38	44	11	80
Rwanda					18	37
Tanzania	70	25	40	50	34	38
Uganda					24	52
Zambia	60	35	40	50	30	42
Zimbabwe					15	28
East Africa Score	64	27	41	52	32	40
Mean Score	71	25	47	50	22	46
SD	8	7	12	3	9	18
CV	11%	28%	26%	7%	41%	40%
West Africa						
Burkina Faso	70	15	50	55	27	18
Cape Verde	75	20	15	40	12	83
Gambia						
Ghana	80	15	40	65	4	72
Mali						
Nigeria	80	30	60	55	13	84
Senegal	70	25	45	55	25	
Sierra Leone	70	20	40	50		
West Africa Score	77	20	46	54	9	78

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Mean Score	74	20	42	53	16	60
SD	5	9	15	8	9	29
CV	6%	28%	36%	15%	52%	48%

Note: Dimension scores were derived from Hofstede Insights: E. Africa Score and W. Africa. SD is the standard deviation, σ, of the Means Score, and CV is the coefficient of variance, σr, based on the individual country scores. Higher % CVs means greater heterogeneity. PDI = Power Distance Index; IDV = Individualism versus Collectivism Index; MAS = Masculinity versus Femininity Index; UAI = Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI); PRA = Pragmatic versus Normative; IND = Indulgence versus Restraint.

for levels of innovation of nations and firms, political and educational environments within a country as well as social attitudes and relationships amongst individuals, they should be updated periodically to track any cultural changes.

To capture the change in culture, we propose that the most recent data on national cultures be reported with the change in the cultural dimension per year, expressed in percentage. To illustrate this, we turn to the work of Fernandez et al. (1997), who showed significant shifts in the Hofstede's cultural dimensions after only ten years. Table 5 captures the changes in culture following the proposed CCF. Unfortunately, representing change in culture this way gives the impression that cultural change is linear. Nonetheless, the overall exercise of capturing the magnitude of cultural change is informative and valuable.

LIMITATIONS OF THE CONFIGURED CULTURE FRAMEWORK

We envisage some challenges and possible limitations to our proposed framework and call for further research. These relate to data collection, data representation, and data measurement.

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Tab. 5. *An illustration of the change in culture using Hofstede's cultural dimension of Uncertainty Avoidance (UA).*

Country	(A.)	(B.)	(C.)	(D.)
	(1980) Standardised value	(1989-1980) Standardised value	Difference in A and B	Absolute value of (D.)
Chile	0.65	0.48	-0.17	0.17
Germany	-0.39	-1.16	-0.77	0.77
Japan	0.95	-0.81	-1.76	1.76
Mexico	0.45	-1.20	-1.65	1.65
USA	-1.34	0.59	1.93	1.93
Venezuela	0.16	0.03	-0.13	0.13
Yugoslavia	0.75	-0.35	-1.10	1.10

Country	(E.)	(F.)	(G.)	(H.)
	Absolute Value of (A.)	%Δ ((A.)/(C.)) x 100	*(F.)/10 Years*	*Direction Of Change*
Chile	0.65	26.15%	2.62%	
Germany	-0.39	197.44%	19.74%	
Japan	0.95	185.26%	18.53%	
Mexico	0.45	366.67%	36.67%	
USA	-1.34	144.03%	14.40%	
Venezuela	0.16	81.25%	8.13%	
Yugoslavia	0.75	146.67%	14.67%	

Note: (A.) = Hofstede's UA from Hofstede collected in 1980 (1980) and (B.) = Hofstede's UA from Fernandez et al. (1997) collected ten years later in 1989/1990.

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Data collection

The first limitation pertains to collecting culture data from each ethnic group, which will be a herculean task, especially for countries with many subcultures. Besides the number of subcultures, there may be limited access to certain ethnic groups due to location, disease, war and/language barrier. Overall, data collection would be more expensive. However, one way to mitigate the cost is to collect data successively at the different locations in waves.

Data representation in the mean

The second limitation pertains to how the data will be represented. If data representation is a simple average from each subculture, we would lose information related to the size of the populations, which may be adequate if the goal is the capture the diversity of the subcultures. However, if the mean using a weighted average that considers the population sizes, then the culture would be similar to Hofstede's scores or closer to that of a monolithic culture, especially if one group dominates in size. Perhaps reporting both a simple mean and a weighted mean would be helpful.

Data measurement of variance

The third limitation relates to how to interpret the coefficient of variance. If every country had equal numbers of subcultures, then the variations would be easy to compare by country. High coefficients of variation would suggest that the subcultures are heterogeneous. Unfortunately, the CCF is limited in this sense since it may not always accurately reveal divergence or convergence given the unequal distribution of the diversity across the world.

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CONCLUSION

The fact that national culture is heterogeneous as demonstrated by Harrington and Gelfand (2013) and evolves over time (Wu 2006; Fernandez et al 1997) calls into question existing method of measuring and reporting culture scores. Scholars have opined that a new way is necessary and have hinted on some alternatives. Yet, no framework has been advanced to capture heterogeneity and cultural change. We advance such a framework, the Configured Culture Framework (CCF), which proposes two main ideas. The first is that cultural heterogeneity should be captured by the coefficient of variation of all the subcultures within the national culture. The second is that cultural change should be captured by the percent change in culture per period (e.g., year). Therefore, CCF has four main implications – two for cultural heterogeneity and two for the cultural evolutions: 1) at the minimum, when researchers report national scores, they should include the exact location (the city or town) where the data were collected. We think this is a best practice in culture research because it would foster more nuanced (e.g., intra-state or intra-nation) comparisons within the research community; 2) national culture scores for any cultural dimension should include data from at least three locations to allow for the calculation of the coefficient of variation for each country. Furthermore, this would permit for countries not only to be compared based on their shared values (culture scores) but their heterogeneity values (coefficient of variation) as well; 3) whenever possible, new data sets should be collected for cultural dimensions instead of relying on dated scores; 4) the percent change in culture over a given period should be reported along with the most recent scores to indicate the magnitude of culture change per year.

In an era characterized by globalizing markets, it is unwise to assume the influx of outside products and mass-availability of ideas will have no influence on "national cultures." Hofstede (2014) has also noted that increases in worldwide differences in wealth will

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only result in increased cultural differences, not cultural convergence. Furthermore, the connotation that individuals across the expansive nations existing today will universally conform to a single behavioral and belief pattern is equally misguided. Adopting CCF and its implications gives researchers a robust platform to interpret human culture and, importantly, acknowledge its evolutionary nature. Culture is an essential aspect of the human condition; only by recognizing its heterogeneity and changing nature can one fully appreciate its implications on economic growth and the international market at large.

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