

# OUTSOURCED: USING A COMEDY FILM TO TEACH INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

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*Given that feature films can enhance the teaching of intercultural communication, this article describes in detail how the 2006 comedy film, Outsourced, can be integrated into a course. The article relates the film to four different functions of film and shows how Outsourced can help create an intercultural experience for students, serve as the basis for a case analysis of cross-cultural adjustment, give meaning to cultural concepts, and create powerful metaphorical images to expand classroom discussions to broader issues. Also explored are ways the film can be used in teaching advanced intercultural communication concepts.*

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FROM THE BIG SCREEN of the movie theatre to the smaller screen of the university classroom, feature films have an important role to play in teaching intercultural communication. Although the importance of film is generally acknowledged, a more difficult feat is finding descriptions of “specific films or specific approaches to use in teaching about culture” (Cardon, 2010, p. 152). This article describes how the 2006 film, *Outsourced*, can be used in teaching intercultural communication. First, I describe my considerations in selecting a feature film for the culture component of an undergraduate business communication course offered at an American-style university in the Middle East. Interwoven into this description is some discussion of my particular classroom setting. Next, I describe how the selected film, *Outsourced*, can be used to teach intercultural communication in four ways—as *experience*, as *case*, as *meaning*, and as *metaphor*—using the functions of film in teaching outlined by Champoux (1999). At the end, I briefly discuss how *Outsourced* can be called into service in the teaching of advanced students of intercultural communication.

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## CONSIDERATIONS IN SELECTING A FEATURE FILM

On the surface, it would seem that a multicultural setting such as Dubai, United Arab Emirates, would be an ideal location for teaching intercultural communication. After all, this country of more than eight million people is a bustling mixture of nationalities, and it has the highest net migration rate in the world (United Arab Emirates, 2010). However, my students—young Emirati women—generally live somewhat sheltered lives and cultural practices work against their mingling with outsiders. The result is that despite the multicultural nature of the city and country where I teach, the students themselves tend to have limited intercultural experiences that they bring to the classroom.

During my first semester of teaching a business communication course in Dubai, 3 weeks were devoted to intercultural communication. During those 3 weeks, I explained typical terms such as *uncertainty avoidance* and *low-context culture*. I used the standard classroom exercises that accompany chapters on intercultural communication, such as a “values questionnaire,” which asks us to consider, for example, who of three people should be asked to jump out of a sinking lifeboat to allow the remaining two people an opportunity to live. Answers to this question can reveal, for example, to what extent a culture is oriented toward youth or the elderly or to achievement or status. I also recounted various anecdotes about my experiences of living in eight diverse countries over the past 25 years. Although these stories perhaps intrigued or surprised students, they remained *my* stories—events I had lived through and whose context I knew well, a context that students could not begin to appreciate.

Thus, a desire to add value to this component of the course was the driving force for me to look for a film to incorporate into the classroom. My search was greatly aided by the Intercultural Film Database, an online project of the University of Hildesheim’s Institute of Intercultural Communication in Germany. The project website (<http://www.uni-hildesheim.de/interculturalfilm/index.php>) analyzes various films according to 20 cultural dimensions explained in a glossary on the website. I developed a shortlist of films after browsing some of the analyses. From this shortlist, I looked at trailers of the films available online through YouTube and the films’ producers, and then I selected *Outsourced*. (A trailer for *Outsourced* is available at [http://outsourcedthemovie.com/c\\_intercultural.html](http://outsourcedthemovie.com/c_intercultural.html).)

Released in the United States in 2006 and directed by John Jeffcoat, *Outsourced* is a comedy about a Seattle call center manager named Todd Anderson whose job, along with that of his staff, is outsourced to India. To add insult to injury, Todd is sent to India to train his replacement. The film revolves around Todd's culture shock in India, the friendships and romance that develop, and the way he adjusts and is ultimately changed by his experience in India.

Although my criteria for selecting a film may not have been clearly articulated at the time I chose *Outsourced*, looking back I see that seven considerations dominated my thinking. Namely, I was looking for a film that would:

1. *Demonstrate concepts.* The whole point of using a film was to show examples of cultural dimensions being discussed because, as Champoux (1999) argues, "film scenes can offer a visual portrayal of abstract theories and concepts" (p. 206). Using a fictional film was also a convenient means of deflecting attention away from discussions focused on local examples. In a setting where democracy is absent and where reverential photos of the country's rulers adorn billboards, using local examples of "high power distance," for instance, could be perceived as being critical or derogatory. Wanting to avoid such a situation, I found *Outsourced* to be an excellent choice. As Bisoux (2009) notes, "As a fictional comedy, it allows students to critique and discuss its content freely" (p. 44).
2. *Avoid simplistic cultural caricatures.* Although an ideal film for teaching intercultural concepts "should provide several clear examples of contrasting values and the behavioral manifestations that result," as Mallinger and Rossy (2003) claim (p. 616), at the same time I wanted to avoid a type of "good guy–bad guy" dichotomy or a film rife with cultural stereotypes. After all, film should be used to teach "not only the broad concepts of culture but its complexities as well" (p. 613). *Outsourced* meets this criterion: The film's "realistic, documentary-like portrayal provides students with a rich window into a global environment" (Bisoux, 2009, p. 44).
3. *Fit in with a culturally conservative environment.* Much material used in Western classrooms could be considered culturally offensive in Middle Eastern classrooms. *Outsourced* has a PG rating and is generally acceptable, despite some mildly bad language and a few romance scenes. I ended up not showing certain parts of the film that could offend, such as a scene (quite tame by Western standards) where Todd Anderson and his romantic interest are in a hotel room together.

4. *Have a connection to business.* Since the course is part of the university's core business curriculum, I wanted the film to have some type of business theme. The film's title is evidence of its business thrust. *The New York Times* review of *Outsourced* also confirms that the film's culture-clash story "could be taught in business schools" (Seitz, 2007, para. 11).
5. *Offer a connection to South Asian culture.* South Asian workers make up the largest expatriate group in the UAE (United Arab Emirates, 2010) and their dominant presence here engenders a negative attitude toward them by some Emiratis. To counter this tendency, I wanted a film that featured South Asian personalities in a sympathetic way because film may be a critical component in developing empathy and cross-cultural sensitivity (Tidwell, 2001).
6. *Provide a cross-cultural experience.* Given that many students' movements are limited due to family or societal restrictions, firsthand cross-cultural experiences may be difficult to promote. A film such as *Outsourced*, which offers a realistic intercultural scenario, can be a useful substitute. As Champoux (1999) observes, "Inexperienced students will likely benefit from the use of film because of a greater feeling of reality" (p. 206). "The unique qualities of film . . . can create strong experiences for viewers" (p. 211).
7. *Entertain and motivate.* I decided to show, over three class periods, most of the 103-minute film. Because much class time would be devoted to the film, I wanted to make sure that I chose a film students would enjoy. Enjoyment and motivation to learn more about different cultures can go hand in hand. Cardon (2010) notes that "one of the primary benefits, particularly among university students, is that films are entertaining, engaging, and in many cases stimulate curiosity toward other cultures" (p. 151).

## **USING *OUTSOURCED* IN TEACHING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION**

In discussing ways that film can be used in teaching, Champoux (1999) cites four functions that are explored here: as experience (creating an experience for viewers), as case (providing a nonprint case to be analyzed), as meaning (giving meaning to theories and concepts), and as metaphor (creating metaphorical images of abstract concepts). I will discuss how *Outsourced* can be used as a basis for each of these functions in teaching.

## Experience

Using film as experience, instructors of intercultural communication can rely on *Outsourced* to introduce students to Indian culture by showing certain customs and behavior in the country. From the moment the protagonist, Todd Anderson, arrives in India (Bombay and later Gharapuri), the viewer lives through the new experiences that Todd confronts. The film's visual detail and soundtrack featuring Indian-style music combine to transport the viewer to Todd's new world. On arrival, Todd faces a chaotic transportation system, having to jump onto a crowded moving train, and later chasing after his suitcase which is thrown into a small auto-rickshaw, or as Todd calls it, "one of those taxi go-cart thingies." He immediately observes different customs, beginning with a man urinating by the side of the road and continuing to the street boy who pesters him and later snatches his cell phone. At the ragtag building that has been built to house the call center where Todd will work, a cow appears in one of the offices in one comic scene where Todd stands flabbergasted, while his Indian counterpart (Puro) remains unfazed by the cow's presence.

Different food, language, and marriage practices are especially prominent in the film. In the realm of food, Todd eats *gola* from a street vendor, and his subsequent stomach problems become fodder for future comic scenes. When he is offered a snack at the guest house where he stays, Todd makes the cultural faux pas of eating with his left hand, considered the unclean "toilet" hand in many parts of the world. At one point, feeling obvious pangs of homesickness, Todd craves a cheeseburger and travels to Bombay by taxi to visit what he thinks will be a McDonald's, only to find out that he has arrived at an imitation fast food restaurant that serves only "maharajah veggie burgers" and the like.

Numerous language differences are highlighted in the film, beginning with names. Everyone Todd meets—much to his frustration—ends up calling him "Mr. Toad." Todd, in turn, comically fumbles the names he encounters. For example, when his Indian replacement, Puro, announces that he plans to marry a woman named Bhagyashree Sasamunde, Todd questions: "Baggy who?" Later, when Puro explains to Todd about the Indian festival day of *Holi*, which celebrates color and the changing of seasons, Todd quizzically inquires: "Holy what?"

Todd quickly discovers that the slang terms he casually uses are unfamiliar to others. In one scene at the beginning of the film, Puro comments about how impressive Todd's business card is—*Executive Vice-President of Marketing and Order Fulfillment* for Western Novelty. Before Todd realizes that Puro will be the replacement that he is to train, he replies: "Not as impressive as it sounds. What I really do is sell kitsch to rednecks and now I have to train some other schmuck to do it." To this, Puro politely responds: "Would you kindly be telling me what is *kitsch*, and what is *redneck*, and what is *schmuck*?"

The training of Indian call center representatives to deal with American customers highlights other language differences. One call center worker replies to a grandmother's inquiry about school supplies for her grandson's first day of school by suggesting: "Perhaps some rubbers, ma'am?" This example engenders a chain of misunderstandings. Todd says that "eraser" should be used instead of "rubber," explaining that "a rubber means condom." "Oh, you mean like a flat," chimes in one worker, to which Puro offers: "No, they call it an apartment."

Marriage practices discussed in the film play a big role in Todd's experience of discovering India. At one point, Todd is incredulous when he discovers that an Indian woman he becomes romantically involved with (Asha) has been engaged since the age of 4 as part of an arranged marriage by her parents. Puro's pending marriage also reveals different cultural considerations in the setting of a wedding date. When Puro faces the prospect of losing his job, he is sure that Bhagyashree's parents will have her marry someone else right away. "What's the hurry?" inquires Todd, to which Puro replies: "Astrology. Her moons are lined up. Auspicious time. She must marry this year."

Witnessing the numerous situations Todd faces in adjusting to India provides a rich intercultural experience for student viewers, even if that new culture is experienced vicariously.

## Case

*Outsourced* can be used as a basis for a case analysis of cross-cultural adjustment. Todd's initial encounters with his staff at the Gharapuri call center are especially valuable as material to be examined by students. Todd acts in an ethnocentric manner at the beginning. In one scene, he chastises his Indian employees, saying: "The center's numbers

are nowhere near what they should be, and based on the customer complaints we've been having, it's a culture thing. Basically, you people need to learn about America." Ignoring the fact that the workers are native English speakers, albeit with a different accent, Todd admonishes them: "Basically you people need to learn about America. . . . Things go faster if the customer feels they are talking to a native English speaker." Concluding the session, Todd reminds the workers once again: "Learn about America. You want to sound American."

In one particularly revealing scene, Todd displays his ignorance about Indian culture and the Hindu religion by discussing one of the company's novelty products: a burger brand (a type of branding iron for steaks and meat). Responding to a question from one of the call center workers about the purpose of the product, Todd increasingly repulses his audience as he discusses cattle branding practices in America. The scene culminates with Asha, who is a call center worker, advising him: "You need to learn about India."

Todd's transformation in becoming more comfortable with Indian culture and open to discovery about the culture provides a potentially interesting case study to examine specific ways in which a person can ease adjustment to a new culture. The turning point for Todd's transformation apparently begins when a compatriot he meets at the quasi-McDonald's indicates that he too felt frustrated when he first arrived: "I was resisting India. Once I gave in, I did much better." Some time after that conversation, Todd admits to his staff that he has made a mistake in trying to run the Indian call center like an American office. He asks for, and implements, suggestions for improving the work environment. In a subsequent fun-filled work session at the call center, Todd good-naturedly obliges a request from a worker to do a dance from an Indian movie.

Even during his most ethnocentric phase, Todd remains a likeable character. The fact that he endears himself to the movie viewer from the beginning perhaps adds to his value as a subject for a case study.

## Meaning

"Film is an excellent medium for giving meaning to theories and concepts," according to Champoux (1999, p. 211). *Outsourced* is particularly well suited to give meaning to intercultural concepts. For my class,

I relied on five sets of commonly used cultural dimensions featured in Adler and Elmhorst's (2008) textbook *Communicating at Work*. In fact, before viewing the film, students were given a table containing the terms with space to jot down notes about scenes from the film that demonstrated particular cultural dimensions. The sets of terms mirror in large part the predominant framework set forth by Geert Hofstede (1980) in his seminal study of international work values.

Below I provide a brief explanation of each of the five sets of fundamental dimensions of cultural diversity from the Adler and Elmhorst textbook (low-context and high-context culture, individualism and collectivism, low power distance and high power distance, uncertainty tolerance and uncertainty avoidance, and task orientation and social orientation), along with examples from the film that represent each of the dimensions.

### **Low-Context Culture and High-Context Culture**

A low-context culture "uses language primarily to express thoughts, feelings, and ideas as clearly and logically as possible . . . The meaning of a statement is in the words spoken" (Adler & Elmhorst, 2008, p. 47). A high-context culture, on the other hand, "relies heavily on subtle, often nonverbal cues to convey meaning, save face, and maintain social harmony. Communicators . . . discover meaning from the context in which a message is delivered" (p. 47).

In the film, Todd has a straight-talking style that reflects a low-context culture. For example, when Todd is first taken to the ramshackle building that houses the call center in Gharapuri, he does not hide his reaction: "Oh, you gotta be kidding me. This is it?" he asks Puro. Similarly, Todd does not hide his dissatisfaction with the call center's high MPI, the average number of minutes per incident spent to resolve each call: "Why is the MPI so bad?" he asks. "Puro, this place is a disaster."

In contrast, Todd's Indian counterparts reflect a high-context culture. For example, when Todd asks Puro if he can take a long trip to recover a shipment that has been sent to the wrong location, Puro declines the request in a very indirect manner, in line with collectivists' concern for maintaining social harmony. "No problem," he says. "But first I must sleep for two hours, so that I can come back for the interviews with the new agents, and then I must make sure that my mother gets to the hospital."

### ***Individualism and Collectivism***

Individualistic cultures “offer their members a great deal of freedom, the belief being that this freedom makes it possible for each person to achieve personal success” (Adler & Elmhorst, 2008, p. 48). Members tend to “put their own interests and those of their immediate family ahead of social concerns” (p. 48). In contrast, members of collectivist cultures “have tight social frameworks in which members of a group . . . feel primary loyalty toward one another and the group to which they belong” (p. 48).

Todd has his own apartment in Seattle, he lives alone, and he is ambitious and consumption-oriented. As he explains to Puro: “In my world, it just makes sense to work your ass off and go into credit card debt just so you can have that 50-inch plasma.”

Todd also does not see his parents often, even though they live only 2 hours away from him. This news stuns Puro, who also cannot understand why Todd continues to work for a company and a boss he dislikes. Todd and Puro are at opposite ends of the individualism-collectivism continuum.

A series of events at the beginning of the film also highlight the contrast between individualist and collectivist cultures:

- When Todd sits down on a crowded train after a boy has given him his seat, the boy unabashedly sits on Todd’s lap, much to the surprise of Todd, who is used to the private personal space of a person from an individualist culture.
- When Puro is taking Todd to his accommodations, Puro changes the plans for Todd to stay at the Gharapuri Palace Hotel. “That place is very lonely,” says Puro, in true collectivist manner. “I’ll take you to Auntie Ji’s guest house. She will take care of you better than your own real mother.” When individualist Todd protests that he would prefer to go to his hotel, Puro insists: “We go to Aunti Ji’s. . . . You’ll not be lonely there.”
- Finally, when Todd arrives at Aunti Ji’s, this is the first question she, as a collectivist, asks: “So, Mr. Toad. What does your father do?”

Interactions between Todd and Asha also highlight the contrast between members of individualist and collectivist cultures. When Todd asks Asha if she would ever consider living in the United States, she

says: “I would miss my parents; it would be too hard.” When they are in public together, Asha is concerned what others will think. Todd, on the other hand, cannot understand this preoccupation. “You’re a free woman!” he exclaims. Then when he hears the news that her parents have arranged her marriage since she was a child, he can not believe that a smart, opinionated woman like her would accept this. “What about your right to choose for yourself?” he asks.

### **Low Power Distance and High Power Distance**

Cultures with low power distance “downplay differences in power” (Adler & Elmhorst, 2008, p. 50) and its members are comfortable approaching or challenging superiors. Cultures with high power distance accept an unequal distribution of power and the fact that “some members have greater resources and influence than others” (p. 50).

The low power distance characteristic associated with American culture is revealed in the totally uninhibited way in which Todd speaks to his boss, Dave. On different occasions, Todd calls Dave a “corporate slime-ball” and a “cheap bastard.” Todd’s demonstration of low power distance contrasts with the deferential way in which his Indian employees address him, using *Mr. Todd* and *Sir*.

### **Uncertainty Tolerance and Uncertainty Avoidance**

Cultures that tolerate uncertainty are more comfortable with unpredictability and risk taking, and they are “relatively tolerant of behavior that differs from the norm” (Adler & Elmhorst, 2008, p. 50). Cultures that avoid uncertainty “are less comfortable with change. They value tradition and formal rules, and show less tolerance for different ideas” (p. 50).

In *Outsourced*, Asha refers to practices in India that are characteristic of uncertainty avoidance: “A girl in my position has her whole life mapped out in front of her.” Asha explains that her father is an assistant manager in a phone company and that her mother comes from a small village. Asha said that as she was always being told: “Asha, you can’t go to university” or “Asha, you can’t work in a call center—what will people say?” According to Asha, “Everything I’ve done I’ve had to fight for.”

In a significant moment for Asha, Todd shows her that people can change their “inherited” roles. Representing a culture that tolerates

uncertainty, Todd promotes her to assistant manager, saying he believes that “Asha can do anything.” Those words are magical for Asha. “I always wanted to believe that, but until you, I didn’t think it was true,” she tells Todd.

### **Task Orientation and Social Orientation**

Task-oriented cultures focus on making its members “more competent through training and use of up-to-date methods and are highly concerned with individual success” (Adler & Elmhorst, 2008, p. 51). Cultures with high social orientation “focus more on collective concerns” such as cooperative problem solving and maintaining a friendly atmosphere (p. 51).

In *Outsourced*, the continued pressure to achieve a lower MPI rating reflects the task orientation of Todd’s and Dave’s culture. Puro, on the other hand, represents a social orientation when, early on, concerned about Todd’s unwell appearance from eating *gola*, he abandons his job responsibilities to go find food that will help Todd’s stomach.

Using a conceptual framework such as cultural dimensions, backed up by specific examples from a film such as *Outsourced*, helps students to see general differences among cultures. But, as Mallinger and Rossy (2003) note, film is useful when it goes beyond the broad concepts of culture to encompass “its complexities as well, especially the ambiguities and paradoxes that characterize the subtleties of interactions among individuals from different cultures” (p. 613). Here again, *Outsourced* does not disappoint. Here is a brief summary of ways characters in the film display cultural dimensions not usually associated with their native cultures:

- *Individualism and collectivism*: At the end of the film, the first phone call Todd makes when he arrives home in Seattle is to his parents. His experience in India has changed him, and this phone call is one manifestation of that change.
- *Low power distance and high power distance*: Indian call center workers begin to address Todd by his first name.
- *Uncertainty tolerance and uncertainty avoidance*: In the midst of tradition-bound India, Todd’s Indian neighbors who live on the other side of the wall of the guest house demonstrate an extreme ability to adapt to difficulties and to find creative solutions to problem. Thus, a sterling example of uncertainty tolerance exists within a culture prone

to uncertainty avoidance. Todd himself is inspired by these neighbors when he takes action to restore electricity to the call center after flooding.

- *Task orientation and social orientation:* Although Todd is the task master at the beginning of his tenure in India, he later veers toward a more social orientation, by asking his Indian employees: “What would make your work day a more positive experience?” For their part, the Indian employees become more task oriented as they respond to an incentive program that rewards MPI improvement by giving them access to company merchandise.

In sum, *Outsourced* provides a rich backdrop for exploring the meaning of intercultural concepts, in terms of broad generalities as well as accompanying complexities.

## Metaphor

Films can create powerful metaphors, which “often leave lasting impressions that a person easily recalls” (Champoux, 1999, p. 210). One can find a number of metaphors in *Outsourced* that merit discussing, such as the reference in the film to the *bindi* Asha wears on her forehead, or as she explains: “the eye with which you see the most important things.” The film also makes repeated reference to Kali, the Goddess of Destruction. Explains Asha: “She ends one cycle so a new one can begin.”

Two metaphors in the film are especially poignant. One metaphor in the film is the wall between rich and the poor. This metaphor appears in the form of the wall that separates the comfortable guest house where Todd stays from the spartan shacks on the other side. At one point, Todd dares to breach the wall and discovers that the people he meets on the other side of the wall are—despite their poverty—dignified, proud, and extremely resourceful. Scant dialog occurs during the scene where Todd, obviously moved, shares a meal with a family on the other side of the wall. It is one of the most memorable scenes of the film.

Another powerful metaphor is the “(Call) Fulfillment” building that serves as the call center headquarters in India. The word *fulfillment* (with British spelling) is etched onto the front of the building. That image can be a metaphor for what the company means to the people who work there. For Todd, he makes the decision to walk away from the materialism that motivated him before in order to seek another type of fulfillment. For the Indian workers, on the other hand, the fulfillment

center represents a step up to middle-class living standards and the ability to purchase the “kitsch” products that Todd so despises.

Because metaphors can prod the imagination and offer a new way to experience facts (Champoux, 1999), their presence in this film can help stimulate discussion about broader themes related to the film.

## **USING *OUTSOURCED* TO TEACH ADVANCED INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION**

The well-traveled or culturally savvy student may at times find the characters in *Outsourced* to be a bit stereotypical or the dialog somewhat glib. Such students may also find that classroom discussion focused solely on five cultural dimensions (as presented under the rubric of *Meaning*) is overly restrictive and simplistic. In spite of these seeming drawbacks, *Outsourced* can nevertheless serve as a valuable classroom resource in conveying higher-level concepts related to intercultural communication. Three ways the film can serve advanced students lie in (a) promoting discussion about cultural stereotypes in film, (b) applying universal cultural dimensions to different domains, and (c) exploring alternative cultural constructs. Each of these ways is discussed below.

### **Promoting Discussion About Cultural Stereotypes in Film**

According to Mee and Dowling (2003), “Films are cultural products that contain representations of people and places, and therefore visions of how the world is or should be.” They “provide powerful maps of meaning that simultaneously challenge and sustain the status quo” (p. 185). The viewing of *Outsourced* can provide a basis for discussing cultural stereotypes in film. Questions that can be explored include the following:

- Does *Outsourced* represent the world as it is, or as it should be (or as neither of the two)? Similarly, does *Outsourced* promote or break down stereotypes? (For example, is Todd’s portrayal of Americans as detached from their families accurate, or does Asha’s childhood engagement reflect marriage practices of today’s middle-class Indian families?)
- What is the difference between generalizations and stereotypes, and are all stereotypes necessarily negative or false? (See Inigo, 2007, pp. 3-4, for an overview of this topic.)

- How are various ethnic and cultural groups portrayed in movies, and how does the portrayal change according to the source of the movie (such as Hollywood or Bollywood)?

### **Applying Universal Cultural Dimensions to Different Domains**

Geert Hofstede's (1980) scientific study of work values identified five universal dimensions of national cultures: individualism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity (equivalent to Adler & Elmhorst's, 2008, *task orientation*), and long-term orientation. Hofstede's framework still serves as a benchmark for discussion of cultural dimensions and is "the dominant culture paradigm in business studies" (Nakata, 2009, p. 3). Numerous follow-up applications and studies make use of the framework, offering a rich supplement to any basic discussion of cultural dimensions. For instance, various applications use Hofstede's framework to examine the effect of cultural differences on the following:

- *Economic models.* As an example, in collectivist cultures with low levels of individualism, material rewards to spur productivity may not work as they do in individualistic cultures (Mitry, 2008).
- *Fashion magazine content.* Hofstede's theories can be used in observing differences in the content of *Vogue* magazine across three cultures: Russian, British, and French (Kopnina, 2007).
- *Terrorist activities.* High uncertainty avoidance was linked with terror-related violence in a study of terrorist activities over a decade-long period (Wiedenhaefer, Dastoor, Balloun, & Sosa-Fey, 2007).

To explore the vast array of applications that are based on a handful of cultural dimensions first requires an understanding of these basic dimensions. Through examples present in *Outsourced* that convey the meaning of these dimensions, students can obtain the grounding needed to further explore specific domains where these cultural dimensions have been applied.

### **Exploring Alternative Cultural Constructs**

Despite the predominance of Hofstede's framework, many agree that new cultural constructs are needed given culture's changing nature. Nakata (2009) explains in the book, *Beyond Hofstede: Cultural*

*Frameworks for Global Marketing and Management*: “When Hofstede wrote his book in 1980, the world was a simpler place” (p. 5). Now with the advent of globalization, “cultures are traversing national borders, co-mingling, hybridizing, morphing, and clashing through media, migration, telecommunications, international trade, information technology, supranational organizations, and unfortunately terrorism” (Nakata, 2009, p. 4). The book examines culture theories other than Hofstede’s and would be a good starting point for an investigation into alternatives.

Exploring these alternatives, however, requires an understanding of the model the alternatives purport to replace. Here again, *Outsourced* can play an important role in demonstrating to students traditional cultural dimensions.

## CONCLUSION

As a film called into service in the teaching of intercultural communication, *Outsourced* is a useful resource for both beginning and advanced students. Francis Jarman (n.d.) reminds us, in his online welcome message to the University of Hildesheim’s intercultural film database, that films “mustn’t be mistaken for real life, but they lead us back to it, more thoughtful about the people and cultures that we encounter” (para. 3). True to Jarman’s words, a film such as *Outsourced* can help us lead our students to real intercultural life and to greater reflection about particular people and cultures.

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