Toward an emergent global culture and the effects of globalization on obsolescing national cultures

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Abstract

One of the major effects of globalization is the creation of a new and identifiable class of persons who belong to an emergent global culture. As membership in this new global culture rises, many critics find a distinct threat to national cultures, resulting quite possibly in their eventual obsolescence. In this paper, we consider the trends driving the growth of this newly emerging global culture, the process by which new members are socialized into it, the characteristics, or features, that appear to be descriptive of its members, and the impact of this emerging global culture on the obsolescence of national cultures. Finally, while it is unrealistic to expect that the emerging global culture will replace national cultures, we nevertheless conclude that national cultures must be adaptable and able to emphasize the attractiveness of their core elements if they wish to remain relevant in some viable fashion.

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1. Introduction

As David Ricks (2003) demonstrates in his introduction to this special issue of the Journal of International Management, there is a great deal of controversy concerning the net effect of globalization and the global corporation. As he correctly indicates, the conclusion as to whether this march has been for good or bad depends on not only the person’s perspective but...
also on the issues under examination. In this article, we address the impact that globalization is having on the obsolescence of national cultures around the world and the associated convergence of these national cultures into one commonly accepted global culture. The emergence of a global culture has profound implications for national cultures, not least of which is the prospect that national cultures are perhaps moving towards a certain degree of obsolescence. We begin our discussion by considering trends that clearly suggest this shift toward an emergent global culture is indeed occurring. Next, we describe the key characteristics and features of this global culture. Finally, we consider several implications of this shift for national cultures, and suggest some conclusions and recommendations.

We begin with the following observation. In summer 1996, an unusual international sporting event took place. Several hundred of the finest athletes from over 30 countries converged on the United States for 2 weeks of intense competition in a variety of events. The competition was not the International Olympics, but the ESPN Extreme Games. Many of the events involved sports that are less than a generation old. With few exceptions, the competitors did not look or dress like typical athletes. What made the event noteworthy, in addition to the competition of the games themselves, was the commonality of dress and appearance as well as speech and behavior among the athletes. With the exception of accents, it was nearly impossible to determine the nationality of the competitors through simple observations of dress or behavioral mannerisms. In one competition, the first, second, third and fourth-place finishers were from four different countries, yet there was little in the way of outward demeanor, style or expression to indicate either the respective countries of origin or that they were from different countries at all.

Juxtapose the Extreme Games with a report recently released by Coopers and Lybrand (1997) of a study involving more than 1200 graduating seniors from 30 leading universities in 10 countries. Addressing issues of life priorities and career goals, respondents displayed remarkable uniformity across nations. With regard to choosing priorities in life, students in all 10 countries were in agreement on the four most important priorities, which included one’s own personal development and growth; developing a career; spending time with close friends and relatives; and building a family. They were in similar agreement when it came to views on international careers. Seventy-eight percent expressed an interest in working for a global company, 74% were positive about working for a company with operations in international markets and 73% wanted to work with clients from different countries.

In 1991, the first author assisted colleagues at New York University in a negotiation simulation involving MBA students and experienced managers from Japanese trading companies. The students had prepared extensively for the negotiations by researching Japanese business style, particularly negotiation strategies and tactics. With eight separate runs, four teams of Japanese negotiators worked on one side of the issue while four others took the opposite side. Each Japanese team was matched with an NYU MBA student team. However, as the simulation progressed, the MBAs were clearly taken aback. The Japanese negotiators did not “act Japanese.” In fact, as one student noted, “they might as well have been from New York or Chicago.” This reaction is not just the perspective of students. Subsequent experiences with the same negotiation simulation involving business executives
from other countries revealed similar reactions. Although the executives were identified as being from a particular country and exhibited some mannerisms and characteristics associated with that country, their overall negotiation behaviors gave little indication of their national cultures once the exercise began.

Over the past several years, we have heard similar stories from colleagues using this negotiation simulation in countries as disparate as France, Japan, Australia and Mexico (Bird, 2002). Increasingly, an identifiable and homogeneous group is emerging at least within the world business community. This group neither shares a common geographic location, socioeconomic class, religion, native language nor a national culture. Yet they share a common set of values, attitudes, norms, language and behaviors. With one foot in their native culture and one foot in the global arena, they are members of a distinctly identifiable and emerging global culture. In some cases, they appear to share more in common with others active in the global village than with those of their own national culture. They are members of what we identify as the emergent global culture.

2. The emergence of global culture

The forces responsible for the emergence of a global culture are drawn from among the usual suspects rounded up whenever talk turns to globalization: growth in world trade and the business activity that accompanies it; dramatic improvements in telecommunications; ease of data storage and transmission; increased facility and opportunity for business and leisure travel; and so on. Taken as a whole, these forces have contributed to the perception that the world has grown smaller and to the reality of increased interdependence (Clark and Mathur, 2003).

One influential account of globalization, the McDonaldization theory (Clark and Mathur, 2003), argues that cultural influence flows primarily from the United States to the rest of the world. The natural conclusion, therefore, would be that the emergent global culture is simply the exportation of U.S. culture to the rest of the world. However, the following evidence suggests that such an argument is far too simple to capture the complexity of the worldwide move toward globalization. Rather, in the words of Zwingle (1999), “Goods move, people move, ideas move and cultures change” (p. 12). So, from where is this emergent global culture emanating? The data seem to suggest that even if we accept the argument that there is one world culture emerging, it is not necessarily the one we may be inclined to think it is. Let us see.

2.1. One world, one language

Over time, there has been a significant decrease in the total number of languages spoken worldwide. Linguists conclude that around 10,000 spoken languages have existed. Around 1900, it was estimated that the world’s population of 1.5 billion people spoke approximately 6000 native languages, whereas today’s world population of almost 6 billion speaks less than 4000, and many of those are not being taught to children (thus, they are in effect already
dead). By 2100, it is anticipated that fully half of the languages spoken around the world today will most likely be lost (Davis, 1999). Further analysis of the data shows that more than half the world’s population speaks the top 10 indigenous languages combined. However, English is quickly becoming the most commonly taught second language for the emerging global culture. One key implication of the data is that never before in world history have more people been able to speak and communicate with one another in a common language. Moreover, with a subset of perhaps three or four languages (e.g., English, Mandarin Chinese, Spanish and possibly French), there are few corners of the globe where one can travel and not be understood. The clear trend is that this is going to shift over time only farther in the direction of fewer languages with greater geographic coverage.

2.2. One world, one thirst

It is difficult to go to even the most remote regions of the world and not find evidence of Coca-Cola products. In addition, its advertising and branding images are among the most widely recalled worldwide. With a presence in nearly 200 countries, company records note that less than 30% of corporate income is derived from within the United States (Coca Cola, 2002). Perhaps, the dogma of McDonaldization is true—at least when it comes to beverages. The United State’s soda of choice dominates the world soft drink market.

2.3. One world, one food

When we look not at what the world drinks but rather at what it eats, it turns out that the influence of the United States on globalization takes its cues from a Swiss transnational company, Nestle’s—the self proclaimed “Food Company of the World.” According to company information, Nestle’s currently has factories in more than 80 countries, while its products are available for sale in nearly every country (Nestle, 2003). A cursory review of its product catalog shows that it owns many brand names that are quickly and easily recognized in all corners of the globe.

2.4. One world, one car

When it comes to the question of what the world drives, it is no longer an exclusively Western European/North American influence on globalization because the Japanese carmaker Toyota is most likely to have built the automobile driven in most corners of the world. Unknown outside of Asia just a few decades ago, Toyota and its subsidiaries now sell vehicles in more than 170 countries (Toyota, 2003), giving it a presence in more countries than any other auto manufacturer in the world.

2.5. One world, one worldview

Beyond the question of what we eat, drink or drive, it would also appear that we are moving toward a single worldview, thanks in large measure to the effects of such media
outlets as CNN, *Newsweek*, *Wall Street Journal* and *National Geographic*, to name just a few. There appears to be a common message that is heard, often simultaneously, in all parts of the world, through major news organizations and publications. Many of these media outlets have a single central voice and message, even though they are often regionalized to reflect local needs and interests (*Newsweek* has its European edition and the *Wall Street Journal* has its Asian edition, for example). This one worldview appears to be true not only of our news and information providers but also for our entertainment sources as well. Hollywood blockbusters, such as the *Star Wars* trilogy (which opened simultaneously in 60 countries when re-released in 1997) dominate the world’s theaters and video outlets. More than 90% of the top money-earning films in history are from one country—the United States (Zwingle, 1999).

In sum, though diversity still abounds, the world is clearly becoming more unified and homogeneous. People are sharing more in common across the spectrum of their daily experiences regarding what they speak, drink, eat, drive, watch for entertainment and listen to for news. The pervasiveness and strength of this commonality of experience around the globe is key to understanding the emerging global culture because culture is learned and acquired through shared experiences. This is addressed more fully in the following section.

### 3. Acquiring membership in the emergent global culture

Although the evidence supports the observation of a growing one-world village and the recognition of increased global interdependence, these alone cannot explain either the emergence of global culture or the degree to which it is being embraced. Mere exposure to global currents and access to televisions, radios, films or the products of international trade alone are insufficient to compel such persons to become members of the emergent global culture. Indeed, membership in any culture requires more than a simple awareness, or even acceptance, of certain ideas as fact. For example, one can accept certain notions about the French culinary arts and yet not be French, nor even care for French cuisine. Nor would we call French those persons who simply express an affinity for things French.

One of culture’s attributes is its delineation of membership boundaries. Such boundaries cannot be established absent interaction among a given culture’s members. It is, in part, this interaction—the shared experiences that come from working and living in the international arena—that gives one membership in the global culture. Absent this interaction, one cannot be a member of any given culture. As Lasch (1995) notes in his criticism of the world human rights movements:

> ... the capacity for loyalty is stretched too thin when it tries to attach itself to the hypothetical solidarity of the whole human race. It needs to attach itself to specific people and places, not abstract ideals of universal human rights. We love particular men and women, not humanity in general (p. 123).

Thus, members of the global culture possess membership because of their attachments to other similarly situated individuals. In this respect, global culture consists of persons who are
self-selected. Those people who choose to attach themselves to other members of the global culture thus become members themselves. Those who do not, or cannot, are not members of the global culture. Nevertheless, this notion of self-selection and attachment begs the larger question: What is necessary before people can self-select and attach themselves to others in the global culture? That is, what is the process of enculturation?

Central to the process of enculturation and culture membership is the idea of having a shared experience with others. In the case of global culture, the experience may be the enculturation process itself. It is a process that individuals can experience regardless of the national culture from which they may have originated. Osland (1995) describes the enculturation process (although she refers to it in transformational terms) when she likens it to the changes people go through as they venture out on an extended sojourn in another culture. She frames the experience using Campbell’s (1968) “myth of the hero’s adventure.” The significant point of this analogy is that as people interact with those from another culture, some few undergo a change as they experience new relationships and move toward new attachments. The adjustments required to be effective in these emerging relationships and attachments with people from the new culture lead to fundamental changes in values, attitudes, norms and behavior. Having undergone this transformation, these people then seek out others who have had similar experiences and may then be described as being connected (or attached) with them.

This fundamental shift toward the values, attitudes, norms and behaviors of the new culture are key to understanding the mechanism by which people come to be viewed, either by themselves or others, as members of the new culture. Because the underlying process and nature of this transformational experience itself is the same regardless of the cultures involved, this gives people a common lens through which the world is understood: a common set of values, norms, attitudes and behaviors. Each sojourner thus empathizes with every other sojourner because they all share experiences of once having been an outsider, of trying to adjust, adapt and otherwise fit in.

Although Osland’s (1995) original focus was on expatriates, her framework suggests that any extended intensive interaction with another culture can lead to this transformational experience. And, because this transition need not be restricted exclusively to national or regional cultures, we see it occurring among the Extreme Game athletes in our opening example. That is, through their efforts to fit into and adapt to the culture of a particular sport, such as streetblading, these athletes transcend their national cultures as they move toward adopted membership into the street culture of suburban southern California teenagers, among whom the sport originated.

We should also note that movement toward membership in a new culture does not necessarily require direct contact or interaction with current members of that culture. The widespread diffusion of various cultures—be it national and other—through such media as television, movies, videos, music and the internet, makes it possible for new adherents to

\[ \text{Streetblading can be described as rollerblading in public areas with a special emphasis on trick skating maneuvers involving the use of handrails, rampways, stairs and other atypical skating surfaces.} \]
form enclaves without the requirement of direct contact. The result is a cultural Diaspora absent any mass migration.

In addition to the idea of culture as shared experience, culture also involves affiliations and relations with others. That is, cultures can also be defined as groups of people. At this level, we are also seeing the emergence of a global culture made up of people who move in an international and global arena (that is, they are people who are truly global in their lifestyle), and, as a result, they have attachments to people outside their own countries. This is in large measure due to the rise in expatriate assignments and the growth in global travel. Such people are not passive recipients of a culture that is simply pervaded to them, or that absorbs them, but rather are actively engaged in embracing global culture. The implication is that it is possible in this highly mobile age to feel much more closely attached to (and to have more in common with) people half way around the world than to one’s next-door neighbors. These are people who often describe themselves as being genuinely bicultural (or even multicultural). People who fit into this particular strain of global culture are those who may retain their national culture citizenship but would be considered to have two passports—one physical passport identifying them as a citizen of their home country and one psychological passport identifying them as a broader citizen of the world.

But, this latter example digresses. Not all adherents of a new culture necessarily experience the transformation that gives rise to membership in the global culture. Nor does the shared experience of the sojourner’s transformation (and the common lens through which members of the global culture view the world) require them to give up “citizenship” in their national culture. As members of the global culture, they still likely retain much of their national culture, especially as it pertains to their life in that culture. Thus, political persuasions, religious views and social preferences colored by the national culture may well remain largely intact. Nevertheless, we would expect members of the global culture to see the world differently, not as they did before.

4. What do members of the global culture look like?

If members of the global culture retain much of their national culture and behave within that cultural milieu much as they did before, then what distinguishes them now? What common values do they possess? What characteristics do they share beyond that of having had some transformational experience? The following list provides a description:

- **Educated.** They typically possess higher levels of education, or at least more advanced than others at a similar age and standing in life. They are also well informed and knowledgeable about the world and international affairs.
- **Connected.** These are people who use available means of travel and communication to be connected with the world. This connection may occur physically, such as when they are out traveling the world, or it may occur virtually, such as when they communicate via e-mail or personal internet web sites.
• **Self-confident.** These are also people who, as a result of their experiences and success at operating in a global world, feel very self-assured. This is a natural outgrowth of the “heroic adventure” they have been on, which leads them to tremendous confidence in themselves to overcome challenges and obstacles.

• **Pragmatic.** Members of the global culture can also be characterized by their pragmatism. This is not to say that they are unconcerned with principles, but rather that they are decidedly concerned with getting things done and have experience at finding creative or novel ways to accomplish things.

• **Unintimidated by national Boundaries or cultures.** Consistent with their elevated self-confidence, people who are members of the global culture are unintimidated by national cultures or boundaries. Such constructs are not viewed either as obstacles or sources of anxiety.

• **Democratic and participatory.** These individuals also tend to be more democratic and participatory in their orientation toward life generally. This dimension reflects their willingness to go out and take the initiative, as well as their expectation that others would do the same and work together.

• **Individualistic but inclusive.** Because of their self-confidence, they are comfortable taking the initiative in an unusual, distinctive or original fashion. They might even be described as idiosyncratic at times. However, they often act in ways that are designed to include rather than exclude others.

• **Flexible and open.** These individuals will typically demonstrate good ability to adapt to change and the unexpected. Indeed, they may even show an adventurous spirit and a proclivity for seeking out novel experiences or new adventures.

• **Begin from a position of trust.** Members of the emergent global culture often begin from a position of trust when initiating relationships. In this regard, they may be described as tolerant but not necessarily approving of others.

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5. Impact of emerging global culture on national culture

We have addressed a particular strain of emerging global culture that is often viewed as threatening to national culture. Indeed, much of the backlash that we see (Harrison and Huntington, 2000) reflects a more fundamental perception of the threat that national cultures are under assault—or even in danger of going extinct. We see at least three possible explanations for this perceived threat.

First, members of national cultures are viewed as defecting. In this view, national cultures are believed to represent a set of solutions to fundamental problems of physical and social existence that embody deeply held values and beliefs about what is good and proper in the world. In this regard, they constitute a worldview, a notion of how the world not only *does* but also *should* operate. When that worldview no longer works or is threatened from outside, the national culture faces one of two options: adjust or collapse. Departures are thus seen as defections and suggest that for a growing portion of their respective populations, the cherished national culture is no longer adequate. Members of a national culture who thus
come to embrace the emergent global culture would be perceived as persons who have rejected, even renounced, their national cultural identity even though the supposed defectors might be quite astonished to hear themselves referred to in this manner.

Second, the fabric of national culture is being torn as tension between members and nonmembers of the global class increases. Tension grows between such members and nonmembers because those not in the global class recognize that in various ways they are not connected to the larger world, nor do they necessarily want to be connected. This tension also grows because those not in the emergent global class are not informed regarding the larger world and may develop a sense of alienation and fear of the influences from the broader world. As a result, even greater differences between members of national culture and global culture are likely to emerge.

Finally, global culture is overwhelming national culture. This observation suggests that the currents moving the world towards globalization are overwhelming national cultures, pushing them farther and farther toward the periphery of irrelevance. Indeed, Ohmae (1996) asserts that in the 21st century we will stand up and salute the corporate flag, that nation states will be of no consequence. The increasing fragmentation of nations and societies suggests that national cultures may very well be moving toward obsolescence. Just as environmentalists are concerned about the disappearance of ecological diversity, critics such as Paz (1985) bemoan the homogenizing effects of a one-world culture and distress over the implications of a loss of national and regional cultural diversity as the world moves toward globalization.

6. Some concluding observations

The identification of an emerging global culture presents several challenges for both scholars and practitioners. Three implications stand out with regard to theorizing about culture and international business. First, our theories of cultural influence and interaction need to be more sophisticated and take into consideration the multiple cultures that people bring with them to an organizational setting (Sackman et al., 1997) and the impact of those different cultural identities for within-culture interactions as well as between-culture interactions. More broadly, we need to recognize the influence of the emergent global culture on within-culture interactions between global and nonglobal employees. Ultimately, this may require paying more attention to personal, rather than cultural, factors when analyzing interpersonal phenomena in organizations.

This also seems to suggest that greater emphasis needs to be placed upon explicating the core values that global managers hold because such values will not be easily discernable from the traditional markers of age, ethnic group, national origin and so on. Much like the athletes in our Extreme Games example, global managers will tend to have values that are more in common with other global managers than with those of their own countries of origin, making it much more difficult to assume that the traditional sets of underlying values, beliefs and attitudes are operating in any given situation.

Globalization is leading to significant cultural cross-pollination. Thus, cultures do not operate as uncorrelated independent variables, even though we have historically treated them
this way. For example, studies examining U.S. and Mexican business practices would typically be analyzed as though Mexican and U.S. cultures are independent. But they are not. As such, the interaction (or cross-pollination) between U.S. and Mexican cultures through the years has created a unique dynamic that currently influences US–Mexican interactions. In contrast, there is little contamination between Mexico and Nigeria, such that it may be more reasonable to treat those two cultures as independent. However, with increasing globalization, even this distinction could soon be disappearing.

There are also important managerial implications that derive from the emergence of a global culture. The presence of emerging global culture seems likely to have an obvious impact on staffing and selection. The emergence of a global culture appears to have obviously relevant implications for the staffing and selection function of businesses. For instance, our earlier discussion regarding what members of the global culture look like suggests a number of specific competencies that could be used as the basis for making more effective hiring and internal placement or promotion decisions for jobs that require an elevated degree of global awareness. That is, such traits as self-confidence, pragmatism, flexibility and openness, as well as a greater capacity for trust, would thus appear to be very desirable traits for candidates under consideration for such jobs. Traditional hiring techniques (e.g., interviewing, personality testing, paper-and-pencil inventories, assessment center simulations and past work histories) would thus need to be modified in order to validly take stock of the degree to which candidates possess these desired competencies. Further research would thus be called for to ensure not only the content validity of such a domain of global competencies but also to ascertain the predictive validity of the subsequently adapted selection techniques as well.

The presence of emerging global culture may impact training and development. If we are to consider the new domain of emerging global competencies as being desirable for relevant staffing and selection decisions, then we must also consider the question of whether or not it would be desirable (or even possible) to train for such competencies. One particular concern with this course of action, however, is the recognition that training and development has historically had much greater success when focusing on the acquisition of knowledge, skills and abilities rather than personality traits or predispositions (Stevens and Campion, 1994). Thus, even if one accepts the assertion that it is desirable to have global managers who are more flexible and trusting, for example, the questions must still be asked as to whether or not the content and pedagogy of traditional training and development programs would be adequate for such a challenge (although encouraging research along these lines is emerging in the area of emotional intelligence acquisition; see Goleman, 1998, as an example). Similarly, we must also examine related questions such as: How should the performance evaluation system be modified and how should career paths be managed in order to leverage the acquisition of desirable competencies in order to successfully navigate in the emerging global culture? Additional research in the area of international human resource management is also needed to determine the appropriate answers to such questions.

Local globals may find it difficult, possibly more difficult, to work with local nonglobals. Nonglobals may be less trusting of local globals, creating unique challenges for integration as well as coordination and control. Multinational companies have always had to work to overcome the schisms between local and expatriate managers. Recognition of an emerging
global culture and the concomitant emergence of two tiers—global and nonglobal—within organizations suggest that the critical schism may no longer be expatriate vs. local, but between local globals vs. nonglobals.

Reflecting on the current state of affairs we are left with a host of questions. Can corporations replace nation states? We have our doubts. Are national cultures necessary and inevitable? We are reluctant to hazard a guess, however, the historical answer appears to be “no.” National cultures in large measure reflect the artificial conceit of the era of nation states. Indeed, most of the fragmentation we currently witness in the world is the reaction of ethnic and/or regional cultural groups who feel constrained or oppressed by imaginary lines of national boundaries.

Can the emerging global culture replace national cultures—in effect, rendering them obsolete? We believe this is the most interesting question. However, discussions surrounding this last question cannot be pursued without inevitably raising the larger question whether or not one culture may be viewed as more successful—at least in some relativistic ways—than another. For example, one might argue that a culture is more successful if it has greater adaptive capacity. In this view, cultures reflect a community’s adaptive responses to the surrounding environment. Consequently, cultures that are able to maintain their adaptive prowess over time could thus be described as more likely to be successful than cultures that cannot adapt and maintain themselves over time. If one accepts the criteria, or standard, of adaptation and survival implied in this evolutionary perspective, then this establishes a framework within which we can discuss one culture’s greater success relative to another’s. Such a perspective also recognizes that cultures may be more successful at one point in time but not at another. For example, one could view Greek culture as more successful when it was adaptive and thrived, whereas it later moved to a state of subordination as it succumbed to the overwhelming culture of Rome.

We might also consider a culture as more successful by the criteria of broadness of appeal. This thesis posits that a more successful culture is one that is attractive to those not reared in it. In other words, when given a choice, do people prefer one culture over another? Certainly, in our modern era we have seen vast movements of immigrants as people leave one national culture and move to another. Although the United States stands out as an obvious example, it is not the only illustration. In Asia, many immigrants have flocked to Japan, to the extent that immigration to that country was possible. Similar patterns of migration can be found across the globe and through the ages. Of course, the counterargument here is that these population movements are driven primarily by economic success. However, such an argument only takes us back to the prior evolutionary argument that some cultures are more adaptive at being economically successful. Thus, to the degree that economic success is of broad human appeal, then a national culture that could not deliver economic success would be viewed as less successful than a more economically prosperous culture. In this sense, one culture’s greater appeal over another’s (with economics as just one possible basis for this appeal) would be a useful criteria for establishing the greater success of one culture over another, at least in a relativistic way. In sum, if the degree to which the emerging global culture is both more adaptive and more attractive, then we must conclude that it is indeed acting to obsolesce national and regional cultures.
We believe there is value in asking the question “Are some cultures more successful than others?” If nothing else, such a question forces us to define what we mean by culture and to identify important elements and ways of thinking about culture (that is, it forces us to explicate our criteria). Such a discussion seems relevant now more than ever because we are seeing the dissolution and extinction of some ethnic and national cultures. Does all of this suggest that we are moving to a single, homogeneous global culture? We believe the answer is no. Although the move toward an emerging global culture may mean that national cultures are experiencing a degree of erosion, it does not necessarily mean that they are being erased. As Stegner (1993) points out, cultures are remarkably enduring and persistent:

Habit and attitudes that have come to us embedded in our inherited culture, especially our inherited language, come incorporated in everything from nursery rhymes to laws and prayers, and they often have the durability of flint pebbles in puddingstone. No matter how completely the old matrix is dissolved, they remain intact, and are almost unchanged in the strata of the new culture (p. 99).

Thus, it would appear that we will always have some core elements of national cultures that, even though things are changing at an overall global level, may demonstrate a high level of persistence.

In conclusion, we find ourselves returning to where we started. Why is this emerging trend toward a global culture happening and is its obsolescing effect on national cultures good or bad? Although our discussions may never adequately answer such questions, we have tried nevertheless to point to criteria that informed thinkers can use, both explicitly and implicitly, to explore these issues. If we recognize that cultures operate in dynamic environments, that they ebb and flow, that they emerge and die, then it strikes us that core aspects of successful cultures may persist and take root in new and emerging cultures. We have described an emergent global culture that includes tolerance and inclusivity among its core values. The resultant image is not of a global village, replete with its notions of smallness and similarity. We much prefer the image of a Bedouin tent, capable of expanding and making room for more. In the final analysis, we remain intrigued by the notion of being freed from the constraints of individual culture while capturing the myriad benefits—the insights, the perspectives, the ways of seeing, the ways of knowing and the ways of doing—that each culture is capable of contributing to this world. As Davis (1999) points out:

In the end the cultures that survive will be those that are willing and able to embrace the new on their own terms, while rejecting anything that implies the total violation of their way of life (p. 89).

References