The more we attempt to thrive in an increasingly globalized business realm, the more it becomes crucial to understand and cope with cultural differences that arise in cross-border interactions. As a natural consequence of economic integration and the globalization of business, the need and quest for useful and practical frameworks that would explain the differences among cultural beliefs and value-based attitudes and behaviors within business settings across different cultures have also greatly increased.

However, current models and approaches to national culture have, on one hand, been severely criticized at both the epistemological and methodological fronts; on the other hand, they have lacked a focus on the fact that under one “national culture,” multiple and fluid cultures must coexist. Despite the breadth and depth of such criticism, not much has been done to overcome such drawbacks in the literature, and no useful alternative is offered to scholars and practitioners interested in developing such unexplored dimensions of culture.

The critique is fundamental, but per se is simply not enough. When it comes to large and diverse emerging countries, such as China, India, Russia, or Brazil, the need to mitigate these limitations is even more urgent for practitioners in need of practical guidelines for initial intercultural interaction. In the specific case of Brazil, a continental and multicultural country attracting much foreign attention, little has been published internationally about its organizational culture, its ambiguities, and its potential future developments.

This paper puts forth a conceptual framework of multiple and fluid national culture focused on the contemporary Brazilian context. Its objectives can be summarized as (1) to depict contemporary Brazilian culture(s) from a historical, and also from such fluid and multiple culture perspectives; (2) to put forth predictions to the recent and potential future shifts of the Brazilian cultural texture; and (3) to ultimately make a call for action in the field for culture research focused on multiple and fluid cultural constructions.
Brazilians, in spite of being close to 200 million in number by the first decade of the twenty-first century, and of inhabiting a country larger than the contiguous United States, speak one single language—Portuguese, not Spanish. In addition to the language, Brazilians have an ambiguous relationship with their Latinness. On one hand, they tend to perceive themselves as “more Latin American than anything else,” particularly in the face of deeper perceived differences with more distant foreigners. But by the same token, in some sort of resilient comparative perspective, many Brazilians feel culturally detached from Spanish America, as if constituting a subcontinent of their own. They find it amusing—and often offensive—that foreigners simply assume they speak Spanish, or that they are not _stricto sensu_ “Hispanics,” as if taking pride in being different from their neighbors from Spanish America.

Although such differences within Latinness may appear to foreigners as hazy and representative of mere shades of sameness, they seem to matter to locals and to be at the heart of painful misconceptions in cross-national interaction.

**A Brief History of Terra Brasilis**

A few key historical points will be made here, as they are important to the arguments made below. The first of these key historical facts is that Brazil was differentiated from Spanish Latin America since the Discovery. Brazilians do not recognize Christopher Columbus as their discoverer but, rather, attribute such honor to the Portuguese Pedro Alvares Cabral, who reached the country and claimed it for Portugal eight years after Columbus’s first arrival in Central America. This separation of the Portuguese from the Spanish America will be critical for the later cultural differentiation of Brazil from its neighbors.

Second, Spain and Portugal imposed very different colonization models. Brazil was claimed for Portugal under 1494’s Tordesillas Treaty (conveniently dividing the world between Spain and Portugal at 370 degrees latitude), but not for the same purposes that Spain retained its new possessions. Spain wanted to exploit the rich sources of gold and silver, to both enrich the Crown and finance its expansion. Portugal wanted a passage to India that avoided the sub-Saharan African odyssey for trade. Hence, during most of the sixteenth century, the Portuguese and Spanish Americas had different colonization paths. Much of Spanish America colonized at that time passed through the typical cycles of rapid development derived from widespread exploitation of gold and silver mines, military domination, and later economic abuse of the native population for labor. Many Spanish adventurers took their families and settled either as officers of the Crown or new nobility. They were more entrepreneurial, developed the cradle of local economies, and their descendents maintained strong cultural ties with the Crown, saw themselves as Europeans, and kept their ethnicity and thus the divide with the “Indians.” On the Portuguese side of the New World, no large waves of conquerors or adventurers rushed to Brazil: the first colonizers were renegades left behind as punishment to further understand the natives. To later exploit the colony, the Portuguese Crown had to finance large hereditary concession protectorates (“Capitanias”) and, as most of them failed, had to finance expeditions to impose “Portuguese order,” composed typically of functionaries, craftsmen, soldiers, and convicts (Skidmore, 1999). Brazil was thus established as a remote administrative unit of Portugal, “legally inaugurated” as a colony, under Portuguese laws and institutions, rather than one developed from a free flow of activities of events surrounding a trade or exploitation, as in Spanish America (Fausto, 1999). This start had a significant impact on the relationship of Brazilians with laws and regulations, as discussed below.

The third key historical point concerns the shift taken by Brazil at the beginning of the seventeenth century, which left deep marks on the country’s identity, orientation, and social structure. Anxious to further exploit its new possessions, clearly underdeveloped and pale in comparison to their Spanish counterparts, the Portuguese decided to follow the model of early settlement of Caribbean colonies by other European nations: decimation of native inhabitants by exploitation or...
disease, followed by the introduction of sugarcane cut by black slaves imported from Africa (Maxwell, 2003; Page, 1995). This period provided the foundation for the creation of a mixed, and complex, early society. From the economic identity perspective, this turn not only further differentiated Brazil from its neighbors but had long-range implications for its future economy and orientation. As Maxwell puts it, this spin was to permanently influence the composition of Brazilian society, the possibilities for economic development, and also the country’s integration into an “export-oriented, monocultural (sugar, at first), Atlantic-facing commercial system” (Maxwell, 2003: 48).

Fourth, adopting this model reinforced and deepened the country’s social foundation on what Ribeiro (1996) called the suppression of discrepant identities, the repression of separatist movements, the destruction of ethnic groups, as well as the brutal exploitation and genocide of slave (native or African) populations. Following the Caribbean model, massive amounts of slaves had to be imported: Brazil imported the majority of slaves brought to the New World (Skidmore, 1999). Hence, a significant portion of the population today is of African descent in full or in part.

The fifth key element in Brazil’s colonial history is the formation of a deeply hierarchical social structure, due to many historical facts. First, the hierarchical nature of the colonizer: governors and viceroys sent by Portugal came from aristocracy and lived as even higher nobility in the tropics (Maxwell, 2003; Ribeiro, 1996), usually around the colonial sugar plantation (Engenho) (Holanda, 1984). Second, the institutions and laws administratively imported and imposed from Portugal into the colony guaranteed and extended privileges to positions of social stature and to ethnicity that the Portuguese had before coming to Brazil (Faoro, 1976; Guerreo Ramos, 1983). Third, with massive land comes remote settlements, and with that comes massive and enduring local power of landlords and public officials (Maxwell, 2003), and people learned to live in such reality, even after slavery, in exchange for shelter and protection. It was the birth of the ambiguous hierarchical structure in Brazil, simultaneously stringent and paternalist (Barbosa, 1992). Fourth, Brazil learned to live with demonstrations of power and force among such groups in the political arena as well, which strengthen the country’s sense that “everyone should know their place” (Barbosa, 1992; DaMattia, 1987, 1989). This stretches from the undisputed power of viceroys until 1808, the exiled Portuguese Crown (1808–21), a Brazilian Monarchy (1821–89), recurring dictatorships until 1985, and through most of this, three centuries of vast and ruthless slavery, abolished in 1888. Finally, hierarchy was reinforced and brought to the industrial age by immigration. After the abolition of slavery, landlords and industry moguls were in desperate need of cheap labor to continue their export-oriented activities. This opened the door to massive waves of immigra-

tion through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, first by Italians and southern Germans, and later, mostly in the 1920s, by Japanese. Most of these immigrants were faced with less than ideal working conditions, and many retreated inland to seek shelter in agriculture. Ultimately, Brazilians learned from the country’s inception to expect, fear, admire, and respect authority.

These five key historical points do not fully encompass the country’s rich history and by no means intend to summarize it, but they serve as a historical foundation for several of the cultural portrayals and predictions of Brazil discussed below.

Current Brazilian Organizational Landscape

At this point, a few issues have to be mentioned about contemporary Brazil and its challenges, which ultimately mediated the influence of these historical foundations in Brazilian culture. Without understanding the influence of these contemporary elements, one would be wrongly inclined to assume that the historical ingredients previously discussed would produce simple, direct, and linear cultural effects in current times.

First, the strong elite that evolved from colonial times into the urban and industrial landscape still sustains an intricate political oligarchy, which has traditionally struggled to maintain privileges and thus to prevent free economic activity and free trade that could jeopardize them. This isolated the country for decades, until the gradual opening of the economy in the 1990s (Maxwell, 2003). Second, Brazil, to this day and age, strives with an archaic, heavy, costly, and tremendously conservative bureaucracy. Despite its size, it is neither efficient nor clean: public service is not up to par with its cost, and high corruption has increased country risk and the cost of credit to the level of much lesser economies. Third, the organizational demography and structure seem to be insufficient to promote significant and well-distributed growth, as well as international competitiveness. Growth per se has been volatile, and wealth and development tend to be increasingly concentrated in the southeast of the country, whereas the north and northeast remain poor. Foreign activity, which has established operations in Brazil since the industrialization of the 1950s, has done so either cooperating with (and thus worsening) the bureaucratic corruption, or acting opportunistically and selectively, bearing the increased risk and cost of doing business in exchange for the significant internal market or for the access to valuable inputs, such as natural resources (again, feeding the export-oriented model) or cheap labor. After the aperture in the 1990s, more businesses came in, mostly under similar assumptions and under the same risks, but in new industries previously closed to foreign capital or restricted to state-owned enterprises. Foreign activity has bought out the majority of the largest and most efficient Brazilian companies, leaving to nationals small and less-structured businesses and industries,
typically not capitalized, not prepared technologically, poorly managed, and with limited competitive potential (Sull & Escobari, 2004).

BRAZIL IN COMPARATIVE CULTURE ORGANIZATIONAL ANALYSIS

In this section, a summary of Brazilian culture depictions in literature will be advanced, which will offer a conceptual baseline to the following section, where we will put forth a conceptual framework on how we can in fact perceive multiple and fluid cultural patterns within Brazil.

Cultural depictions of Brazil abound, as such effort became popular in Brazil during the 1990s (for a review, see, for example, Chu, 2006). Some of such depictions have been based on cross-cultural (i.e., Hofstede-like) quantitative comparisons, whereas others have been based on the discussion of how the historical patterns discussed in the previous section lay the foundation for cultural patterns in present day. As happened elsewhere, portrayals of Brazilian culture tend to become entangled and confused amid different assumptions about the nature of culture, the viability of its investigation cross-culturally, variables to be investigated, and so forth. In spite of the truth and depth of many debates, all these academic discussions seem quite detached from the reality of the individual who needs to first have an understanding of what to expect in Brazil, if coming from abroad.

In this paper, it is assumed that in spite of all potential simplifications and stereotyping, and beyond the extensive work that needs to be done to create clearer and less parochial (Adler, 1997) frameworks, cultural variables, and measures, all such cultural depictions of Brazil may have value, if they are (1) taken as mere “points of departure,” from which careful generalizations may be made at first contact, but from which refinements from actual local experience should be derived; (2) taken carefully, because of the several limitations they possess, and thus used as “insight generators” of business environments in unknown landscapes, rather than as exact, detailed, and definitive topographical maps of the cross-cultural terrain; and (3) used in conjunction with other more case-based and nongeneralizing tools, derived from experience and enriched with the nuances of the specific case.

Brazil in Quantitative Cultural Analysis—Comparative Culture Studies

The stream of research attempting to identify Brazilian cultural traits seems to have been largely influenced by the research tradition inaugurated by Geert Hofstede in the 1970s (e.g., 1976; 2003). Such efforts assume that cultural values or traits can be identified (and compared across countries) and that they can predict behavior. This generated competing typologies, which still spread and diversify to this day and often use countries as the level of analysis, despite subintracultural differences (Dahl, 2004; Hofstede, 2003). Each typology has been based on different assumptions about what culture is, what cultural variables are important, and how country data should be collected and interpreted. It seems fundamental here to at least briefly describe such frameworks and the cultural variables they use.

Two of the dozens of available quantitative typologies and their cross-cultural variables will be discussed here—Hofstede’s and Trompenaars/Hampden-Turner’s. In addition, a Brazilian-based quantitative approach will be briefly portrayed. To avoid having to return to each variable on these quantitative frameworks later, Brazil’s standings in each typology will be briefly mentioned in this section as each framework is mentioned.

The first (and probably still most renowned) quantitative typology is Hofstede’s (2003). As is widely known, Hofstede measured cultural values as they relate to four different dimensions—individualism versus collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity versus femininity. Later, he added a fifth dimension—long-term orientation. In Hofstede’s depiction of the country, Brazil would be a high-power distance country, would display a medium-high level of collectivism, and be prone to have a mild femininity and a medium-high uncertainty avoidance. Using Hofstede data, Brazil would then display a level of collectivism and uncertainty avoidance significantly lower than the rest of Latin America (see Table 1).

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2000) created another typology that mixes values and behavioral traits, comprised in seven specific variables—universalism versus particularism, individualism versus collectivism, affective versus neutral, achievement versus ascription, specific versus diffuse, sequential versus synchronic, and inner- versus outer-directed cultures. Their data also come from questionnaires based on perception measures of one’s culture, and data are still being collected (now mostly online) to this date. Brazil’s depiction in Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner’s typology would indicate that the country is mildly universalist, as opposed to mildly particularist, as the other Latin American countries, as well as less collectivist, more affective and more ascribed than its neighbors, maintaining a mild specificity and a mild outer direction that is also typical in Spanish Latin America.

A Brazilian illustration of this type of effort is the work done by Barros and Prates (1996), who collected data from 2,500 executives from more than 500 companies in the Southeast and South Brazil, using mostly measures inspired by Hofstede, on one extreme, and traditional Brazilian analysts, such as DaMatta (1987; 1989) and Barbosa (1992), on the other. Barros and Prates (1996) derive a model of the Brazilian culture that points to traits such as concentration of power, personalism, and conflict avoidance.
TABLE 1
Brazilian Cultural Profile in Most Cited Quantitative Typologies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantitative cultural variable</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>BRA</th>
<th>LAT</th>
<th>ANG</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hofstede</td>
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<tr>
<td>Power distance</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualism</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculinity</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainty avoidance</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term orientation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trompenaars</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universalism versus particularism</td>
<td>(low)</td>
<td>(high)</td>
<td>(low)</td>
<td>(high)</td>
<td>(low)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualism versus collectivism</td>
<td>(low)</td>
<td>(high)</td>
<td>(low)</td>
<td>(high)</td>
<td>(low)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral versus affective</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieved versus ascribed</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Specific versus diffuse</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Internal versus external</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative cultural variable/dimension</td>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>Latin American average</td>
<td>Anglo cluster</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social stratification</td>
<td>Hierarchical</td>
<td>Hierarchical</td>
<td>Mildly egalitarian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of social relations</td>
<td>Personalist</td>
<td>Personalist</td>
<td>Impersonal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicitness in social relations</td>
<td>High ambiguity</td>
<td>Mild ambiguity</td>
<td>High explicitness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: BRA = Brazil; LAT = Latin American average; ANG = Anglo cluster. * Data only available from one country.

All of these measures and quantitative typologies, if given full credit, would indicate that Brazil falls under several of the same culture or value depictions as its Latin American neighbors, albeit with some deviations and imperfections.

Perhaps some of such inconsistencies derive from several key assumptions these quantitative studies tend to share. The criticism toward such assumptions has generated intense and harsh debate, and has also encouraged the emergence of alternative approaches, mostly from either a qualitative or a historical perspective. For example, all of them have been criticized for being excessively objectivist, for overrelying on standardized variables, for depicting culture as a largely stable variable through time and across a country, and as a poor predictor of individual behavior in cross-cultural interactions. And several critics have their own critics in return (e.g., Hofstede, 2003), in a continued web of academic debate. The reaction to such criticism generated alternative paths, qualitative in nature, some empirical, whereas the majority are more essay based.

Brazil in Qualitative Cultural Analysis

The typical proposition of this line of research is that culture is not measurable through questionnaires and quantitative methods of any kind. Furthermore, many also believe that culture is not stable enough through time, or homogeneous enough within a country, to allow for generalizations of the kind that the four previously summarized typologies tend to make. Therefore, as an alternative, authors in this research
tradition believe that cultural depiction of countries, as in the case of those reviewed here, would reveal traces of Brazilian culture that would not be captured in questionnaires, and not necessarily would have been derived by the general history of the country.

Several examples focusing on Brazilian culture can be mentioned of this group, at the risk of omitting important ones: Alcadipani and Crubellate (2007) conduct a competent revision of most studies. According to these authors, this Brazilian culture tradition can be divided in two groups: one in which the focus has been on depicting unexplored Brazilian traits in Brazilian organizations and another that studies typical Brazilian organizations, and, from them, attempts to extract “typically Brazilian” characteristics that may have been used elsewhere in the country.

From the first group, according to this type of reading, one would infer that this tradition of research may have added to the field the understanding—or deepened the previous knowledge—about Brazil’s pretense tendency to embrace bureaucracy (Carbone, 2000), paternalism (Carbone, 2000; Santos, 1996), personalism (Santos, 1996; Vergara, Moraes, & Palmeira, 1997), aversion to change and entrepreneurial activity (Barros, 2001; Campos 2000; Carbone, 2000; Caveldon, 1998), and so on.

Criticism of this line of research has also abounded (e.g., Alcadipani & Crubellate, 2007): indeed, whereas they have not incurred the same risks of excessive objectivism characteristic of the quantitative tradition, several (although granted, not all of them) tend to display a similar tendency to generalize their findings to the “Brazilian culture,” as well as to indicate that such traits are reasonably stable through time and across the country. When studies extrapolate their findings, the basis for generalization is even thinner than that of the quantitative tradition: after all, the mediator between the single case and the depiction of the overall country is the observer’s perspective of the country’s culture. On the other hand, many of these cases provide rich material for further analysis, which, in most—if not all—cases, was never followed up on, to further determine generalization potential. Unfortunately, as a result, this tradition has had minimal impact in the field, its majority being isolated studies.

**Brazil in Historically/Anthropologically Grounded Cultural Analysis**

The third vein of research is typically composed of those scholars who have grounded their propositions on more established historical, sociological, and anthropological research on Brazilian culture, and attempted to apply such general traits to organizational settings.

Several authors have populated this vein of research, including the present study, but the majority of this type of research in Brazil was done during the 1990s. The late scholar Fernando Prestes Motta was probably the first author in the country to carve out of the rich literature on Brazilian culture the Brazilian traits that would be observable at work and in organizational settings. From his early studies on culture, the depiction of many elements of the Brazilian character was quite influential, producing a wave of cultural studies that, for over a decade (Prestes Motta, 1997), consistently pointed to several elements of Brazilian national culture.

The first of these common elements is the depiction of the hierarchical nature of Brazilian work culture, and the assertion that such trait is a legacy of its colonial past (e.g., Prestes Motta, 1997), as already discussed. These authors proposed that, although Brazil’s hierarchical social structure started in the colonial sugar plantation (Holanda, 1984), it was later implemented in the state bureaucracy and, in the twentieth century, in the manufacturing plant. Rooted in the enforcement of a deeply hierarchical society by the colonizer upon the other ethnic groups, current Brazilian mentality is pictured as one in which a socially veiled prejudice is deeply ingrained not only by ethnicity but also by social stature. This hierarchical culture that flourished in the slave-filled farms seems to have made its way into factories and into the twenty-first century’s workplace.

The second most mentioned element in the Brazilian culture coming from these studies is personalism: the idea that, in Brazil, social and organizational relations are not only regulated by power but also by deep personal relationships that transcend organizational ties. In direct contrast, for example, to North Americans, Brazilians strive not to be like everyone else: in Brazil being like everybody else is typically seen as a diminishing honor, as a condition of inferiority (Barbosa, 1992).

Last, the third most cited element seems to be ambiguity: Borges de Freitas (1997), Caldas and Wood (1997), and Prestes Motta (1997), just to name a few, have revisited anthropological analyses (e.g., Barbosa, 1992) of Brazilian culture and stated the importance of ambiguity, and its importance in social relations in Brazil. As mentioned, since the country’s inception, Brazilians have become accustomed to dealing with a plurality of imposed or alien rules and laws they see no sense in, and others they can relate to, and to know the difference between them. With its development as a nation, and adding to the pot the Portuguese’s lack of universalist principles, in Brazil, the gap existing between norms and social practice is remarkable (DaMattia, 1989: 46). Two typical Brazilian behaviors are examples of the ambiguity cultural trace—the jeitinho and formalism. Regarding the former, the well-known jeitinho brasileiro (“Brazilian way”) includes all social practices attempting to find a way around rules: social practices, rules, and norms that seem absurd to a situation, as well as enormous social distances, may be overcome (Barbosa, 1992; DaMattia, 1987, 1989). Carrying a typical Brazilian ambiguity, it may
denote both unlawful favoring and shameful exceptions to accepted rules, or also the necessary—and socially perceived as fair—bending of rules that otherwise would make life impossible to bear. As it relates to the latter (formalism), the late Brazilian scholar Guerreiro Ramos (1983) carves out this concept by Riggs (1962) to showcase the social tendency to provoke discrepancy between the formal and the real, between what is said and what is actually done. This generates a multilayer social reality, in which one needs to be skilled in figuring out what is factual, and what is appearance, or what is done only “for the English to see” (Caldas & Wood, 1997).

In turn, this line of research has also been recently criticized (e.g., Alcadipani & Crubellate, 2007), due to their alleged use of Hofstede-like assumptions (which here is assumed to be an incorrect and unfair statement), their utilization of historical traits as a means to explain current reality, and their tendency to portray a national “Brazilian culture” that does not allow for regional or temporal differences.

Taken together, and with the adequate precautions prompted by their critics, all these cultural depictions seem to offer a baseline for an alternative perspective, offered in the next section, of Brazilian cultures (in the plural sense) from a multiple and fluid, ever-changing viewpoint.

HOMOGENEITY VERSUS HETEROGENEITY: CONCEPTUALIZING BRAZILIAN MULTIPLE AND FLUID CULTURAL PROFILES

Motivations and Assumptions

In the previous section, the paper summarized key Brazilian historical elements and summarized cultural depictions of the country in the literature. In this core section, the paper attempts to put forth a conceptual framework that depicts (1) multiple cultural patterns within the Brazilian milieu, rather than a monolithic one; and (2) a fluid—rather than static—perspective of such Brazilian cultural patterns through time. The assumption is that historically grounded cultural research in Brazil not only depicted a Brazilian culture, failing to see its immense internal diversity, but has also failed to predict if and how contemporary reality and events may have driven and may still drive the future transformations in these cultural patterns. Despite the enormous risk of such a venture, in the remainder of this paper, a few insights on these fluid cultural shifts will be offered for future discussion in the field.

Such an attempt will be based on several assumptions: first, culture is understood here as a complex and reflexive concept, rather than an objective, quantifiable construct. Culture defines people, who define culture, in a continuous, mutually dependent, and richly symbolic interaction. Second, the idea of “cultural transformations” is not meant to denote short-term population mood shifts, but rather generational or even multigenerational variations, taking many years to even be noticed. As such longitudinal research designs have not yet been developed in the field of organizational cultural studies, it is doubtful that scholars demanding flawless empirical evidence of all this would be comfortable with the constructs propose herein. Neither the predictions nor this paper are designed to please them, but rather to propose an expansion on a field that to begin with based its advancement on leaps of faith, from the fuzziness of the research object, to its observation and analysis. Third, attempts to observe changes in culture are assumed to be mediated by many elements, such as people’s perception of culture, of themselves, of others, by social desirability, and so on. Hence, the predictions comprise conceptual approximations and thought-provoking elements for a dynamic perception of national culture(s), but not for objective variables to be quantified, mechanically dealt with, and statistically correlated; doing so would be a derailment and probably a misuse of the propositions. Fourth, attempts to measure culture in questionnaires face several constraints, such as construct validity (which assumes an impossible culture neutrality or else carries cultural bias by one group’s construct definition onto others), and the tendency to collect not culture, but, at best, people’s perception of culture, and more commonly people’s idealized culture, or a sort of “alter-cultural” construction, which will be further discussed later in this paper. Here it is cautiously assumed that such measures are potentially valid, but it is also assumed that it is not culture but, rather, this “idealized culture,” or “alter-culture,” that will be measured. It is in this sense that such terms will be used in this paper. Fifth, it is assumed here that culture investigators should be more attentive and should attempt to clearly distinguish between cultural values and culturally accepted behaviors, as well as between individual-level and cultural-level of analysis (see Schwartz, 1999, for a review on these distinctions). For that purpose, they could use, for example, opposing cultural dimensions, or differentiate (as in the GLOBE study’s basic design; House et al., 2004) the understanding of culture “as is” from culture as it “should be.” Last, still on the issue of accepting or rejecting quantitative measures, it is assumed here that blunt refusal to accept any sort of quantifiable observations, even partially or with careful pondering, and yet even when complemented with other sources in triangular research designs, ultimately makes little sense. In this paper, this blunt refusal of any quantifiable approach is seen (1) as naïve, as it assumes it to be entirely wrong without further consideration, simply because it is quantitative in nature, as if a mortal sin had been committed; (2) as restraining, as it assumes no knowledge is better than imperfect knowledge; (3) as overly skeptical, as it assumes triangulation and other cross-validation methods cannot detect, correct, or mitigate such imperfections in the models or in their data; and (4) as counterproductive for academia, in a world that increasingly
calls for academics to provide practical answers to practical problems.

A Conceptual Framework for Brazilian Multiple and Fluid Cultural Profiles

The conceptual model that is put forth here assumes that at any given point, cultural shifts—which define both cultural content and level of agreement/coherence on such content—are defined by the simultaneous, dynamic, and opposing tractions between differentiation (or heterogeneity) and homogeneity (see Figure 1).

The central idea is that national culture(s) (and, more specifically, Brazilian national culture[s]) endure(s) simultaneous internal and external pressures toward either of these extremes, and sometimes toward both of them, in which case a tension toward cultural hybridization comes about. Although a broader model of intracultural diversity and fluidity is beyond the scope of this paper, the framework proposes (1) that several of these historical and contextual elements influence the outcomes (again, in terms of cultural content and level of agreement/coherence on such content), as they may pull toward one extreme or the other, or toward hybridization, and (2) that the outcomes of such tractions may also help predict variation in cultural shifts at either national (more homogeneous) or subnational (more differentiated) spheres. Hence, the predictions made here simply use historical and contextual material, as well as previous studies, to propose potential current and future cultural shifts in the previously discussed cultural variables for the Brazilian case.

As can be observed in Figure 1, the overall conclusions here are that in the Brazilian cultural milieu (1) homogeneity tractions seem to have overcome differentiation pressures, and seem to overshadow timid hybridization potential; (2) the wealthier southeast region seems to have symbolically taken over as Brazil’s “alter-cultural” archetype, defining the direction of such homogeneity; and (3) given its urban and highly Anglo-Saxon contemporary cultural profile, such southeast-driven
homogenization may have a somewhat predictable influence on Brazilian alter-cultural patterns.

Obviously, such conclusions and predictions have limitations and are made with the intent of generating more focused research using a perspective that perceives the Brazilian national culture as a multiple and fluid social product, rather than as a monolithic and stable construct; furthermore, the assumption is not the existence of linear and mechanically predictable relationships, given the complex, fluid, and symbolic nature of the cultural change milieu, but rather to unveil potential circular and interactive relationships, to be carefully used as “points of departure” in the research of possible intracultural shifts over time.

Cultural Differentiation (Heterogeneity) Pressures and Their Implications

The first element of the conceptual framework suggests that general and homogenous “national cultures,” particularly in large countries such as Brazil, are, at best, an expression of a potential institutionalization of the previously mentioned “alter-culture”—that is, a common idealized cultural ground to which multiple cultural subfields within a country are comfortable to relate with and aspire for, or, at worst, are dramatic simplifications, which should be used with caution and reservations, and be limited to overcome initial ignorance during initial cross-cultural interactions, and as a “point of departure” to further context- and experience-based constructions.

In the specific case of Brazil, it seems clear that several elements tend to provide heterogeneity pressures. As a non-monolithic construct, “Brazilian culture” should be analyzed so as to verify potential heterogeneity based on several elements, such as geography (potential cultural subregions), an economic context (potential “Brazilian core culture[s]” versus “Brazilian periphery culture[s]”), a geopolitical context (e.g., metropolitan, versus urban, versus rural culture[s]), and so on.

In the Brazilian-specific context, the sheer continental size of the country, as well as internal differences in demographics and historical paths, provide keys to multiple probable cultural heterogeneity patterns. Here, it is proposed—yes, with a considerable degree of simplification—that in today’s Brazil, at least five distinct cultural regions should be observable, probably comprising other multiple internal subdivisions:

1. urban southeast, comprising mostly the states of Rio, São Paulo, Espírito Santo, and southeastern Minas Gerais;
2. urban south, including most larger urban areas within the states of Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina, and Paraná;
3. urban coastal north–northeast, including the major urban concentrations from Belém to Salvador, along the coast;
4. Amazon culture, comprising most of the immense Amazon region west and south of Belém, all the way inland and south to the northern Pantanal; and
5. rural Brazilian culture, representing an actual or idealized counterculture to urban Brazilian culture, would present itself across the country with the mediating effect of the other four regional cultures they surround and depend on.

In this model, southeast Brazil is seen as a particularly relevant cultural region, driven by its role as a development and economic driver in Brazilian current reality. Hence, it constitutes a distinct cultural cluster within Brazil, and its cultural patterns can be seen as the closest to the “alter-culture” that would be nowadays projected in most of the country, both by educational and strong cultural industry drivers. It should be expected, given their geographical and developmental distance from the more industrialized and urban Southeast, that the rural Brazil culture, and partially the Amazon culture, should present greater dispersion from this alter-culture than the other subsets.

In the case of Brazil, cross-regional cultural subsets seem to be noticeable differentiating subcultures that have had distinct historic, demographic, and immigration patterns. For instance, in areas with strong historical differentials, such as Brazil’s rural south (influenced by the “gaucho” culture, and thus closer to Argentina’s and Uruguay’s frontier subcultures), there should be a wider dispersion from the country’s “alter-culture” than in larger and more ethnically mixed urban centers. By the same token, areas with strong historical immigration patterns, such as Brazil’s south, should be strongly affected by residuals of West–Central European cultures or subcultures that originated their immigration flows.

Future research could concentrate, for similar reasons, on developmental contrasts as potential definers of subsets: uneven growth throughout the country, as well as persistence of inequality within the country (depicted by strong internal contrasts, such as those presented in the newly revived “center versus periphery” debate; Wood, 2004) should be relevant in Brazil.

Still, from a developmental perspective, it is important to focus on current cluster developments; for example, in recent years, pockets of non-southeastern economic development have been generated in the country, such as Curitiba, in the urban south region, or Campina Grande, in the northeast region. Regarding such type of regional economic development, as pockets of non-southeast development build up, future research could attempt to investigate if such new centers will either develop distinct cultures from their origins or create cultural hybrids, drawing from their original source cultural patterns, and from the southeast’s.
All these potential cultural movements and implications have been assumed to derive from what we perceive to be “differentiation pressures” in the Brazilian context.

Homogeneity Pressures and Their Implications

When the balance of pressures favors the opposite direction, toward cultural homogenization, another set of causal relationships can be perceived.

The first of such potential relationships has to do with the level of external influence on cultural idealization. The conceptual framework suggests that there may be a cultural homogenizing impact as a function of the strength and “foreignness” of such external influence. Thus, it is assumed here that the more the country depends (culturally, economically, etc.) on a strong foreign nation, the greater homogenization may be expected. In the Brazilian case, this has been suggested as a function of dependence on foreign direct investment (FDI) or external credit, or because of foreign permeability (Caldas, 1997), currently to Anglo-Saxon references. The greater such dependence is, the greater should be the presence of pressures to conform to international standards or hegemonic cultural patterns. Therefore, one could assume that if Brazil’s foreign (economic, cultural) dependencies persist, the current tendency to cultural homogenization (nowadays toward Anglo-Saxon cultural patterns) should also persist or intensify.

Foreign influences may also materialize in the form of internationally legitimized institutional imperatives, such as the “institutional development” practices (mostly democratization, rule of law, and government transparency). As these standards seem to derive from more developed countries, conformity with such imperatives implies a certain level of cultural transference, and in the case of Brazil, of increased “Anglo-Saxonization.”

Conformity to such standards is associated with critical resources for development, such as cost of capital, risk perception for investors, and thus is advocated to lead to economic development (e.g., Kaufmann, Kraay, & Zoido-Lobatón, 1999). Consequently, the pressure to conform becomes both internally and externally reinforced, in the case of less-developed countries such as Brazil, from all fronts—government, international financial institutions, private enterprise, and the press. Ultimately, public opinion may become sympathetic, and one should not be surprised to notice shifts at least in the “alter-culture” to be affected more in line with the prescribed standards or practices, and in a generation or two, “as is” depictions of culture may shift as well. Hence, it could be predicted that such homogenization and Anglo-Saxonization pressures may well be first noticed in “alter-culture” (should be) and only later in current cultural depictions (as is).

It seems evident, in the Brazilian case, that a similar logic of cultural hegemony and transference pressure, even in contexts where there is preexisting cultural diversity, may occur intracountry, in domestic relationships. The area around the Rio–São Paulo axis, for example, has the most significant economic, political, and cultural power and influence. The Southeast becomes the favored migration and educational destination, and the symbolic and socioeconomic model to be followed by “less-advanced regions.” Southeastern cultural references, popular icons, and artifacts become the dominating source of cultural idealization, which may affect the propensity to create or to sustain cultural differentiation. Consequently, future research could verify if, as predicted here, the higher Brazil’s concentration of wealth and development from the Rio–São Paulo axis, the higher will be the tendency toward cultural homogenization toward Southeastern cultural patterns, because such a region has represented the hegemonic “alter-culture,” and, by extension, toward Anglo-Saxonization.

With such economic development, at least in the Brazilian context, also comes urbanization and the growth of salaried, manufacturing work, substituting rural and self-employed activities. Such shifts in professional activity tend to bring a very different perspective of life and work, and how people should relate to one another. Ultimately, in today’s world, with the urban salaried working life, also comes the ethos of the globalized organization, global markets, with its internationally bred standards and imperatives. All this may provoke once more homogenizing pressures toward Anglo-Saxonization, the source and model of such standards. Verifying this potential southeastern/Anglo-Saxon traction is a fruitful research pursuit.

Finally, we should focus on both the cultural differences amid the cultural regions proposed and on the potential effects of a strong drive toward cultural homogenization. It has been mentioned how the Southeastern region has been further industrialized, developed, and internationalized, ultimately implying its further “Anglo-Saxonization.” It has also been mentioned how the north and, most particularly, the northeast have been more associated with traditional values inherited from colonial times, past-oriented political oligarchies, and underdevelopment (Holanda, 1984; Skidmore, 1999). The cultural differences between such regions and the potential impact of a possible homogenizing shift are not necessarily easy to predict with certainty; but given available knowledge on these regions’ recent history and context, one could predict several testable patterns.

For instance, (1) due to its stronger permeability to Anglo-Saxonization, the Brazilian urban southeastern cultural region may present lower collectivism, higher universalism, lower hierarchy, lower risk avoidance, and higher achievement than other regions, followed by the urban south cultural region; (2) due to its historical conservatism and traditional roots, the urban north–northeast and the rural Brazilian regions may display higher masculinity and hierarchy than the ur-
ban southeastern, and slightly higher than the urban south cultural regions; and (3) due to the southeastern-driven Anglo-Saxonization, the higher the cultural homogenization in Brazil, in its cultural patterns, the lower may be the relevance of collectivism, the higher the universalism, the lower the hierarchy, the lower the risk avoidance, and the higher the achievement orientation.

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The potential future cultural developments and patterns put forth in this paper, and the multiple and fluid national culture conceptual framework they are based on, were the ultimate outcome of this study. They depict Brazilian culture from a historical viewpoint, but they also put forth a perspective that perceives the Brazilian national culture as a multiple and fluid social product, rather than as a monolithic and stable construct. Furthermore, they ultimately offer a call for action in the field for research focused on multiple- and fluid-cultural constructions, offering testable propositions for future research.

As far as the conceptual framework model is concerned, the idea is that national culture (and, more specifically, Brazilian national culture) would endure simultaneous internal and external pressures to culturally homogenize or to become more culturally heterogeneous. The paper attempts to analyze such pressures in light of both historical and contextual elements of Brazil, and hence to make predictions on the overlapping and intertwined action of such forces over time.

This study may be criticized for insisting on searching for cultural patterns, albeit admitting and attempting to model them in a differentiated (i.e., multiple simultaneous subcultures or cultural subsets) and fluid (i.e., ever-changing) form. It may also be endlessly criticized for the validity of, or even for the intention of making, the cultural predictions it puts forth.

The point of view held in this study has a pragmatic orientation and seems to mirror the vision of many individuals that permeable use of limited generalizations as points of departure for cross-cultural encounters, rather than fixed and unquestionable stereotypes, despite their several known limitations, may be useful in knowledge development and also to practitioners engaged in an initial cross-cultural interaction with an unknown culture.

It is assumed here that if we use such generalizations as universal and all-encompassing definitions, or as unquestionable and unmovable axioms, with no gradients or exceptions, we simply legitimize undesirable stereotypes. On the other hand, if we use them as somewhat probabilistic generalizations of a generally acceptable or idealized behavior, within a cultural context, we hold potentially useful entry-level knowledge (Gannon, 2003).

In accordance with such a point of view, in this paper, it is assumed that the initial (as in “departure”) and careful use of the generalizations and predictions made herein, as long as not cemented in the organizational actor’s perspective, and as long as it is open to variations, refinements, and updates deriving from real experience, may outdo the typical parochialism and ethnocentrism of self-centered provincialism (Adler, 1997).

If we furthermore assume, as done in this study, that such “points of departure” should not be used alone but, rather, in conjunction with other case- and context-specific information, this line of thinking should not be disregarded and stubbornly ignored because its predictions also are not flawless or all-encompassing, or because their creation may not match one’s ontological or epistemological assumptions.

For an informed, careful, and nonethnocentric business scholar or practitioner, cautious and permeable generalizations and the sort of predictions put forth here may be less than perfect, but they are far from sheer ignorance.

Naturally, predictions are made to be tested, and, in many cases, to be proved wrong. Even more so in contexts in which, as is the case of culture as a subject and Brazil as a background, the object is too complex and fluid to grasp, and there are too many intervening elements that were certainly unaccounted for. In this sense, given the complex and interactive symbolic nature of culture, these predictions cannot be expected to amount to more than the thought-provoking starting points for debate they were designed to ignite.

**NOTE**

1. The Treaty of Tordesillas, signed by Spain and Portugal in 1494, divided the world beyond Europe in two parts, in practice creating a duopoly for future exploitation by the two then superpowers. The land to the west of 370 degrees latitude would belong to Spain, and the land to the east to the Portuguese. Ultimately, this separated Brazil, the Portuguese colony, from the rest of Spanish America.

**REFERENCES**


