Globalization, culture, and communication: Proposal for cultural studies integration within higher education graphic design curriculum

Brooke Scherer
Iowa State University

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Globalization, culture, and communication: Proposal for cultural studies integration within higher education graphic design curriculum

by

Brooke Nichole Scherer

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

Major: Graphic Design

Program of Study Committee:
Sunghyun Kang, Major Professor
Lisa Fontaine
Mark Retanus

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

2010

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ABSTRACT

The late twentieth century was a time of great change. The advent of Internet connectivity and the World Wide Web dramatically redefined the way all humans live and communicate. Where cross-cultural interaction, relationships, and business practices once existed primarily for the wealthy and powerful, we now find these opportunities readily available to all. One major area that has been greatly affected by this transformation is the field of graphic design. Practitioners in graphic design, for the first time, find themselves in a position to work with an international clientele and to design for global audiences. As a result of these expanding horizons, the need to integrate cultural studies with graphic design curricula has become increasingly apparent. To ensure designer success in this newly globalized world, we must make certain that students are leaving the academy equipped with the proper tools and education needed to relay accurate and appropriate visual messages to intended audiences.

This research explores how cultural variances and dimensions affect many major components of graphic design, including diverse social spectra, aesthetic appeal, and purchasing habits. These findings then serve as the basis for a new pedagogic model and proposed learning outcomes. The proposed curriculum works to integrate cultural studies into graphic design education through a writing intensive seminar paired with a comprehensive semester studio course.
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Globalization: What It Means for Graphic Design

Globalization is a historic and ongoing phenomenon which acts to open lines of communication and interaction between people of diverse cultures. Throughout time, globalization has been the process of establishing linkages between these cultures. Some of the historic landmarks in this process include territorial exploration (of both land and water), the trading of goods, and inventions such as industrial machinery, rapid transportation, and technological equipment – all of which have played major roles in linking cultures together. Currently, as people of the twenty-first century, we live in a newly globalized era that continues to redefine itself in response to recent technological advancements. These advancements give us the ability to connect with anyone anywhere in the world without ever having to leave the confines of our own home.

This life-changing technology has its origins in the early 1990s. Characterized by the introduction of the Internet, the development of the World Wide Web, and the emergence of personal mobile communications, globalization has become such an incredible super-power that the way the world communicates, does business, and interacts at an international level has forever changed. Understandably, globalization has also changed the way we look at curriculum and academic planning in higher education in general and, specifically, within graphic design.

People and organizations all define the term “globalization” differently. YourDictionary.com (2008) defines globalization as “the spreading influence of companies beyond their national borders and increasing interconnectivity between the economies and
cultures of countries.” The World Bank defines globalization as “the growing integration of economies and societies around the world” (EJournal USA, 2006, p. 11). Noted author, Daniel Pink, defines globalization as “a broad movement among economies and societies and technology that is knitting the world closer together and affecting capital markets, technology, and the exchange of information” (EJournal USA, 2006, p. 20). Although worded differently, these definitions have a common theme: Technology-generated interconnectivity between nations has combined with political and economic forces, unifying and homogenizing cultures worldwide. This process has tended to erase lines between countries which once had relatively little to do with one another. It has opened new doors to opportunistic communication and business practices, and is linking human societies and cultures together in ways never before thought possible.

Thomas Friedman, author of “The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century,” is most noted for his detailed description and explanation of globalization through circumstances he calls “global flatteners.” According to Friedman (2007), global flatteners are worldwide events that have closed gaps between countries and increased unity among humans, nations, and cultures: “We are now connecting all the knowledge centers on the planet together into a single global network, which . . . could usher in an amazing era of prosperity, innovation, and collaboration, by companies, communities, and individuals” (p. 8). One flattener listed, “The Steriods” (which includes digital, mobile, personal, and virtual media), has taken the information and communication field by storm (Friedman, 2007, p. 187). These steroids allow us to communicate and do business with anyone, anywhere, all with the single touch of a button. As companies begin expanding their businesses worldwide, the need for cultural knowledge and understanding has come to play an important
role in how we sell goods (both in and to other countries), work with global partners, and design products.

The field and practice of graphic design, one of the most important communication and information tools available to humans, is greatly affected by this “flattening” of societies and integration of cross-cultural business. Until recently, the transformation of global information and communication was available only to the wealthy and elite who had “money, equipment, and an infrastructure that most amateurs couldn’t ante up” (Biersdorfer, 2007, p. 91). Fast-forward to the late twentieth century where excitingly new and fast growing computer and desktop publishing software trends fuse with increasingly open lines of communication. There-in lies the opportunity for anyone to team up, work together, and compete globally. By the turn of the twenty-first century, designers found themselves

... in touch with people they’d never been in touch with before, were being challenged by people who had never challenged them before ... were collaborating with people with whom they had never collaborated before, and were doing things as individuals they had never dreamt of doing before (Friedman, p. 204).

It is undeniable that these dramatic changes have greatly enhanced the field of graphic design. For the first time, technology allows any design practitioner (not solely limited to the wealthy) the opportunity to compete for and work with global clientele. This has been a tremendous advancement to our field, however it has not come without complications. First, anyone with the ability to purchase a computer and proper design software (such as Adobe Illustrator, Adobe Photoshop, and Adobe InDesign) can now play the role of “graphic designer.” As stated by Meredith Davis (2005), professor and director of
graduate programs in graphic design at North Carolina State University, “Because there is no licensing or certification in graphic design . . . [the current] 350,000 practitioners [of graphic design in the United States] may or may not hold degrees in design” (p. 13). While layman designers might come cheaper, inexperience and a lack of proper education leads to a greater risk of inaccurate visual communication and may increase printing costs.

Secondly, broadening the reaches of communication to other global cultures means that the knowledge base and skill set of graphic designers must expand beyond their own cultural background. Few American industry designers are adequately equipped with the tools necessary to communicate effectively with these culturally diverse audiences. Until recently, the need for these cultural studies as an integral part of graphic design education was relatively small. However due to globalization and the continuing development of new technologies, the curriculum requirements in graphic design have dramatically changed. Through broadened lines of business communication, married with new and cheaper “anyone can design” competition, academic reform has become vital to the future of graphic design.

As design educators, it is our responsibility to ensure students continue to excel beyond their competitors. An understanding of cultural differences will not only prevent failed messaging and communication, but will guarantee the quality, valuability, and marketability of the designer in this globazlied society. Shifting focus from how much education a student receives to the quality of information learned will ultimately put twenty-first century designers ahead of the game. We must step backward and re-evaluate the effects of globalization on the field of graphic design – how it has reshaped meaning,
redefined communication, and formally changed the needs of our clients. We can no longer solely rely on existing foundations meant for local design:

... rapidly changing technological, economic, and social forces demand different design responses than those society expected decades ago... the survival of the profession may depend less on its traditional education in art-based concepts and more on responding strategically to changes in the business, social, and communication environments (Davis, 2005, pp. 14–15).

Simply put, “students need to reorient what they are learning and educators how they are teaching it” (Friedman, 2007, p. 280). The problem is that most current curriculum models do not integrate the multicultural skills necessary to prepare a new generation of graphic designers for the global society.

**1.2 Purpose of Research**

The purpose of this research was twofold. The first purpose was to explore and define the triangular relationship between culture, visual communication, and graphic design. The second purpose was related to the first: to discover and suggest ways in which cultural studies relevant to the new global marketplace might be incorporated in the graphic design curriculum.

**1.3 Research Questions and Objectives**

The objectives of this research, therefore, are to define the measurements and dimensions by which we understand existing cultures, examine the roles these differences
play in visual communication, and to propose models that integrate cultural studies into the
graphic design curriculum. These objectives suggested three primary research questions:

1. How does culture affect visual communication?
2. How does culture affect graphic design?
3. How might we incorporate cultural studies in the graphic design curriculum?

1.4 Procedure

The procedure was implied by the objectives and is fairly simple. The first step was
to study and define the various dimensions of cultural identity. Geert Hofstede’s
explanations and examples of cultural backgrounds were particularly useful in this regard.
The initial phase of the research identified such variables as: power distance, individualistic
versus collectivistic, femininity versus masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term
orientation versus short-term orientation. It was also necessary to investigate the way a
culture’s perceived contextual environment defines their actions, life, and identity. Richard
Nisbett’s studies and research findings were also helpful in this regard. Returning to
Hofstede’s dimensions, culturally defined symbolism and audience expectations were broken
down in detail, followed by a look at how the above cultural criteria affects consumer
behavior as described by Marieke de Mooij. Lastly, an in-depth investigation looks at the
variances in meaning related to color and symbology in different societies. These differences
are relevant to the graphic designer in preparing messages appropriate for the target audience.
A comparison of Verizon Communications’ American and Asian print advertising
supplements and expands these findings, and is used to propose content which to integrate into graphic design curriculum.

1.5 Thesis Methodology

To show why cultural studies integration into graphic design curriculum is important, American and Asian print advertisements for the global technology company, Verizon Communications, were compared and analyzed. Cultural dimensions, social context, image meaning and content, color, and symbolism acted as criteria for selecting these campaigns. The culturally specific design components in each campaign served as the basis on which to select appropriate cultural content useful to the graphic designer, and therefore necessary for integration into the graphic design curriculum.
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Communication Theory

Before addressing the information graphic designers should know regarding roles cultural diversity plays in visual communication, it is first important to discuss the student’s need for an educational foundation in communication theory. After all, to understand the steps necessary to properly relay a visual message to a culturally diverse audience, one must first understand how the communicative processes between message sender and receiver works.

As quoted by authors John Morgan and Peter Welton (1992), “We [humans] pay more attention to, and remember, messages that we like” (p. 59). This specific statement is the underlying definition of communication theory, and is an important universal existing among all people, in all cultures, all around the world. Audiences significantly base their actions on the messages being relayed to them through various forms of visual communication. Therefore, it goes without saying that each individual is incredibly selective in regards to what messages they choose to both receive and ignore, and our job as visual communicators is to relay proper messaging the audience desires to extert their attention towards. In order for these messages to be successful, the communicator must understand three major components of communication theory that determine a viewer’s selective process: selective attention, selective perspective, and selective recall.

It is true what they say, the first impression is the most important, and this is the underlying theory behind selective attention. This first impression of a message – be it graphical, verbal, or written – grabs the immediate attention of the viewer, and therefore
determines their overall interest in the message. Whether it’s catchy music playing during the intro of a commercial, or a large, catchy slogan on a print advertisement, it is the job of the visual communicator to research and recognize what appeals to the audience’s selective attention (Morgan & Welton, 1992, pp. 59–61).

Selective perception takes messages we positively receive through selective attention and creates affirmative biases to those messages. In other words, a viewer’s selective perception directs their “attention mainly to those messages we know we like: they suit our tastes, confirm our prejudices, or excite our indignation in ways which appeal to our self-esteem” (Morgan & Welton, 1992, p. 61). Through past experiences (built through positive connections made from initial selective attention), the audience creates emotional bonds and is more likely to selectively gravitate towards that which reminds them of positive past experiences – they are using selective perception to attend to certain messaging and block out other unimportant communication.

Lastly, selective recall is the process of remembering what we *choose* to remember. As visual communicators, we have the ability to produce a recall effect within each of our viewers. This recall effect is not only vital to communication, but also to the success of the company in which we are designing and marketing the communication. For example, how many catchy advertising slogans can you recite in your head? Is Verizon Wireless’ slogan, “Can you hear me now,” one of them? Someone who can easily recite this is choosing to activate their selective recall. Although repetition of the message plays a large role in easily remembering the line, what makes the phrase successful is that the original message caught the selective attention of the viewer, who had a positive physical experience with the
company, leading to selective perception, and finally chose – through selective recall – to store the phrase in their memory (Morgan & Welton, 1992, pp. 61–66).

Certain communicative elements such as sense, feeling, tone, and intention are important to the success of the selective attention to selective perception to selective recall process. The sense of a message contains a factual, undisputed point at which the viewer is looking. The feeling of a message denotes one’s attitude towards the sense of the message. The tone of a message creates a bond with the audience – this is a message I am showing you because you are worthy of knowing it. Finally, the intention of a message aims to convince the viewer to participate. For example, a car dealership advertises their line of vehicles to the public. The sense tells us, “I need to buy a car.” The feeling of the message tells the viewer, “I am excited to choose a car that fits my needs.” The tone tells the viewer, “I am inviting you to come check this out for yourself.” And through convincing the viewer that they, too, want to participate and visit the dealership, they instill their intention through their message (Morgan & Welton, 1992, pp. 40–41).

Finally, to in order for visual communication to be successful (especially for culturally-specific messaging), the designer must understand and ask the following questions before beginning any project:

1. “What is your real message?” Understand the exact message the client intends to send.
2. “Who are you talking to?” Who is your audience? What is their demographic? What are their beliefs, traditions, and social attitudes? What specific audience characteristics are important?

3. “What will make them look?” What design components are most important within the given visual communication? Are there certain colors or symbolic elements that are important to the audience? Does imagery place a specific role?

4. “Have I used their prejudices?” Properly understanding the audience’s attitudes, needs, and beliefs is essential to proper visual communication.

5. “Is the balance right between words and images?” Is there a pre-determined balance for the audiences which you communicate? Are the images composed correctly?

6. “Does my presentation mean what I think it does?” Has the designer properly created a visual message that represents the intended audience (Morgan & Welton, 1992, pp. 138–142)?

Making students aware of existing communication theories will provide a strong foundation for integrating cultural studies as a component of visual communication within higher education graphic design curriculum.

### 2.2 Social Culture: Definitions and Dimensions

To help explain the underlying foundations important for understanding cultural studies, this research relies heavily on the work of psychologist Geert Hofstede. Hofstede’s
research primarily aims to break down and generalize cultural societies into five distinct, large-scale groupings of descriptors called “cultural dimensions.”

Culture, according to Hofstede (2005), may be defined as “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others” (p. 4). Culture should not be confused with human nature, for within human nature exists common emotions such as love, fear, anxiety, etc., which are universal among all people. We can differentiate culture from these human nature attributes because culture has distinguishable characteristics (such as peer relationships, personal aspirations, and values) that make one society unique in comparison to others. As defined by Hofstede (2005), a dimension is “an aspect of culture that can be measured relative to other cultures” (p. 23). A knowledge of these specific dimensions will prove to be a vital resource for graphic designers who need to convey messages properly to audiences outside of their own culture.

In his book, “Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind,” Hofstede breaks down his five cultural dimensions as follows:

1. **Power Distance** – the way in which a society deals with equality and inequality.

2. **Individualistic versus Collectivist** – the role of the individual in a society versus the role of the group.

3. **Femininity versus Masculinity** – whether males within a social culture are expected to display masculine traits only, or if society allows men to display both feminine and masculine traits.
4. **Uncertainty Avoidance** – the way a social culture adapts and behaves to uncertainties of the future.

5. **Long-term versus Short-term Orientation** – the importance of an individual’s or group’s actions based on immediate versus future results.

1. **Power Distance:**

   Power distance is “the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally” (Hofstede, 2005, p. 46). In countries with small power distance, such as the United States, Germany, Great Britain, and the Netherlands, status lines separating social hierarchies (for example, boss/employee, teacher/student, parent/child) are either greatly blurred or do not exist. The employee, student, or child – while understanding a separation of power and status exists – are (in most cases) considered equal. Additionally, they show little dependence on higher authority, and feel comfortable addressing issues or problems with their superiors.

   On the other hand, high power distance countries such as Russia, Mexico, and China are quite the opposite. Separation in power between status levels is large, where the employee, student, and child are more dependent on higher authority. Subordinates often exclusively rely on being told what to do (the child actually remains dependent their entire life until the parents are deceased), and will rarely directly oppose or address problematic situations with their superiors (Hofstede, 2005, pp. 43–51).
2. **Individualistic versus Collectivistic:**

   The biggest difference between an individualistic society and a collectivistic society is in the socially defined role of the individual or group. An individualistic culture places the interests of the individual before the interests of the social group, where a collectivistic culture places the interests of a social group before the individual. Interestingly, only a small percentage of cultures worldwide are considered individualistic.

   The family and “in-group” are the most important components within collectivistic cultures. While the significances of family within individualistic cultures often end at parents and siblings, the collectivistic family group reaches much farther (grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and so-forth). Furthermore, in-groups, or “the major source of one’s identity and the only secure protection one has against the hardships of life,” are just as vital in collectivistic cultures (Hofstede, 2005, p. 75). These in-groups might be a social network of friends, co-workers, or something of the like; they are quite cohesive and are not easily broken. On the other hand, individualistic cultures are primarily defined as an “I” society. Social networks are common, but they do not define the individual, and the ties that bind can be quite easily destroyed.

   A person’s identity is defined by their individualistic or collectivistic status. Those within a collectivistic society are defined by the social group in which they belong. In contrast, persons within an individualistic society work hard to distinguish themselves from their peers and to make successful names for themselves. Some of the countries ranking highest on the individualistic scale are: the United States, Australia, Great Britain, and Italy. Countries ranking highest on the collectivistic scale are: Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, and China (Hofstede, 2005, pp. 74–79).
Psychologist Richard E. Nisbett supplements Hofstede’s definition of individualistic versus collectivistic in his book, “The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently, and Why.” Nisbett primarily focuses on the differences between American (Western) and East Asian (Eastern) societies, however the same ideals remain constant throughout cultures worldwide. According to Nisbett (2003), individualistic cultures believe the following:

- Each individual has a precise set of characteristics – people want and desire to be completely distinctive compared to their counterparts.
- Each individual’s personal goals rely heavily on success and achievement – intervention of group members in a task could ultimately stand in the way of obtaining one’s goals.
- Personal success has an end result of personal happiness.
- If the situation calls for a superior or inferior position, the individual almost always strives for the superior position.

Collectivistic cultures, on the other hand, believe:

- The individual should not be concerned with personal achievement – instead, concerns of the group’s performance and goals are most important.
- Success is a result of the group, not the individual.
- “Standing out” in a group (or setting the self apart from others) is undesirable.
- Achievement is a result of being in harmony within the group, as well as meeting the group’s expectations (pp. 47–49).
3. **Femininity vs. Masculinity:**

When defining feminine versus masculine social cultures, focus shifts to the traits displayed by males within the society. This dimension’s bottom line primarily revolves around a country’s tenderness versus assertiveness. As Hofstede (2005) explains:

A society is called masculine when emotional gender roles are clearly distinct: men are supposed to be assertive, tough, and focused on material success, whereas women are supposed to be more modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life. A society is called feminine when emotional gender roles overlap: both men and women are supposed to be modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life (p. 120).

For example, in feminine cultures, it is acceptable for both men and women to possess and express the same types of tender feelings. Additionally, both sexes are considered equals in all aspects of society. On the other hand, masculine cultures are bolder – more forceful – where men are expected to be tough and in charge, and women are expected to be tender and focused around social groups, feelings, and well-being.

Whether a culture is defined as masculine or feminine also plays a large role in other areas of life, such as work and school. In feminine societies (such as Russia, Sweden, Norway, and the Netherlands), it would not be unlikely to see women in lead professional roles such as doctors, dentists, or politics. Additionally, it is common for men to dominate in occupations such as secretarial work or nursing. On the other hand, in masculine countries (such as the United States, Japan, Italy, and Ireland), one finds that occupational dominance shifts substantially. Males more often control leadership roles, leaving women to secondary positions. Striving for excellence, rising above classmates, and openly succeeding in school
is common and accepted in masculine cultures, while flaunting intelligence is frowned upon in feminine cultures because it often leads to jealousy (Hofstede, 2005 p. 137).

4. **Uncertainty Avoidance:**

Uncertainty avoidance is most easily described as the level of threat and anxiety felt within a culture in anticipating “ambiguous or unknown situations.” The level of anxiety is closely associated with a society’s tendency to adopt written and unwritten rules to accommodate for these events (Hofstede, 2005, pp. 166–167). Countries with low uncertainty avoidance (such as Denmark, Hong Kong, China, Ireland, and the United States) are much happier in their lives, show less anxiety with regard to the unknown, accept each day as it comes, are more comfortable in situations which may have unforeseen risks, and are more relaxed. Countries with high uncertainty avoidance (such as Greece, Portugal, Russia, and Japan) are less happy, have higher levels of stress and anxiety, are afraid to step out of the norm for fear of danger, and have more stressful family lives (Hofstede, 2005, pp. 168–181).

5. **Long-term versus Short-term Orientation:**

Long-term orientation versus short-term orientation is primarily focused around the desire for future rewards versus instant gratification. Key differences between these orientations are very distinctive: in short-term orientation countries, such as Spain, Great Britain, the United States, and Germany, people believe that all actions should have quick results – that instant monetary gains (such as from investing in stocks) are more important than long-term investment results. Additionally, ideals of saving money now for later use is
relatively unimportant. Ironically, on a global scale, the economic growth of a short-term orientation society is incredibly low. In contrast, long-term orientation countries, such as China, Hong Kong, Japan, and Korea, believe that one’s actions should perpetuate long-term goals – money should be invested in long-term, reliable funds (such as real estate) to ensure future financial rewards. In these cultures, children are taught to be cautiously economical and “not to expect immediate gratification of their desires” (Hofstede, 2005, p. 214).

2.3 Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions: Making Connections

When assessing cultures and dimensions, interesting cross-links emerge which allow us to group individual societies together into larger categories. For example, “Many countries that score high on the power distance index score low on the individualism index and vice versa” (Hofstede, 2005, p. 82). The chart in Figure 1 shows how fifty-eight international countries rank and compare based on Hofstede’s five dimensions (power distance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation versus short-term orientation). Further analysis of this information shows that certain dimensions are commonly linked to others.

When interpreting the chart in Figure 1, it is important to note that the larger the number shown, the lower the country’s rank on the spectrum. For example, if a country ranks number one in power distance, it is the highest ranking level of that cultural dimension (the higher the power distance rank, the lower the country’s power distance). If a country ranks number one on the individualism index, that country is designated the most individualist on the chart (the higher the number, the more collectivistic the country). The
same holds true for the masculine column, the uncertainty avoidance column, and the long-term orientation column.

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**Figure 1: Cultural Dimension Comparison Chart.**

PDI - Power Distance Index; IND - Individualism Index; MAS - Masculinity Index; UAI - Uncertainty Avoidance Index; LTO - Long-term Orientation Index.
Although unlisted by the authors, it is important to note that China (a significant participant in this newly globalized economy) ranks as a high collectivistic and masculine culture, and is a weak uncertainty avoidance culture (Hofstede, 2005, pp. 78–169).

After studying the chart in Figure 1, the following connections between the varying cultural dimensions become apparent:

- As Hofstede mentions, countries ranking high on the power distance index also rank low on the individualistic index. This signifies the relationship between collectivistic in-groups and the distinct line drawn between superiors and inferiors in high power distance societies.

- The same holds true for masculinity versus power distance. Oftentimes, when a country scores high on the masculinity index, they also score low on the power distance index. However, just because a country scores high on the masculinity index (resulting in low power distance), inferring a high individualistic index rating, masculinity/femininity stands completely apart from individualist/collectivistic (as can be seen in Figure 4). According to Hofstede (2005), where individualistic versus collectivistic cultures are focused on the “I” versus the “we,” masculine cultures are focused around individual ego, and feminine cultures are more focused on relationships in accordance to feelings (not predetermined associations defined by in-groups) (p. 123).
• Relationships commonly exist between uncertainty avoidance cultures and masculine/feminine cultures. As shown, the more feminine a culture, the stronger the uncertainty avoidance, and vice versa.

• Finally, although few countries rank on the long-term orientation scale, most have a correlation with individualism. The more long-term oriented a country ranks, the lower it ranks on the individualistic scale, and vice versa.

The chart in Figure 1 reveals undeniable connections between cultural dimensions, defining cross-sections and relationships pertinent to both visual communication on a global scale and the future of graphic design education. Not only does this chart open the door to understanding the beliefs, traditions, and lives of various cultural societies, but it should act as a “bible” of sorts when researching and designing for cross-cultural clientele.

2.4 Exploring Additional Cultural Dimensions

While this specific research relies greatly on the cultural foundations set through Geert Hofsted’s five dimensions, it is also important to recognize that other cultural dimension theories exist and are pertinent to the exploration of cultural studies. One set of such dimensions were developed and defined through the research Dutch author, Fons Trompenaars, and British Management Philosopher, Charles Hampden-Turner. Through their book, “Riding the Waves of Cultures: Understanding Diversity in Global Business,” Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner have developed their own culturally-based model comprising of seven dimensions. These dimensions include: universalism versus particularism, individualism versus collectivism, neutral versus emotional, specific versus
diffuse, achievement versus ascription, sequential versus synchronic, and internal versus external control. Although not formally integrated into the specific methodologies of this thesis research, a brief overview of Trompenaars’ and Hampden-Turner’s work is provided to show the importance of other existing cultural dimensions:

1. **Universalism versus Particularism:** The importances of strict rules to define society (universalism), or the idea that close relationships are means for rules to bend (particularism).

2. **Individualism versus Collectivism:** Do people consider themselves a separate from society and the group (individualism), or is an individual’s identity contingent upon society and the in-group in which that person belongs?

3. **Neutral versus Emotional:** Is the society one where people are allowed to display their emotions (emotional), or are people expected to act detached and emotionless (neutral)?

4. **Specific versus Diffuse:** Is responsibility specifically assigned to an individual (specific) or does the responsibility spread among many (diffuse)?

5. **Achievement versus Ascription:** Does our status and achievement depend on the success of our personal goals, or is your status automatically prescribed to you through birth or family/social connections?

6. **Sequential versus Synchronic:** Are we a society that does many things at once (synchronous), or complete tasks one at a time (sequential)?

7. **Internal versus External Control:** Do we have control of our own environment (internal), or do the laws of nature and environment control our life (external) (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998, pp. 1–160)?
Through these descriptions, we begin to see cross-sections in relationship between Hofstede’s and Trompenaar/Hampden-Turner’s cultural dimensions. It is important to note that cultural understanding does not rest upon one or two distinct theories, but rather many, and further research should be considered when attempting to understand the varying definitions of culture.

2.5 Understanding Social Context: Environmental Factors

Strongly contrasting cultural beliefs can be traced as far back as sixth century, B.C. What is now considered the “Western” way of thinking is a direct derivative of Greek culture during that period of time. Current Eastern (Asian) beliefs (also existing during sixth century B.C.) were primarily derived from Confucianism (Nisbett, 2003, pp. 2–6). The defined characteristics of each of these cultures have carried through to present day, and are dramatically apparent in each of Hofstede’s cultural dimensions.

The Greeks believed in “personal agency” – that is, “the sense that they were in charge of their own lives and free to act as they chose” (Nisbett, 2003, p. 2). As an individualistic culture, the Greeks believed in unique personal identities independent of peers and society – that each person had their own individual goals to obtain. The Confucianist counterpart, however, believed in “harmony” where “every Chinese was first and foremost a member of a collective, or rather of several collectives – the clan, the village, and especially the family” (Nisbett, 2003, p. 5). These modes of thought can easily be seen when comparing present day Eastern versus Western ideals regarding the ultimate meaning of an object’s place within its environment. East Asian (collectivistic) cultures believe a person (or individual object) is established by its surroundings – without a defined external context, that
particular object could not exist. Comparitively, western (individualistic) cultures believe that an object’s meaning is completely disconnected from its surrounding environment – the focus is the object, not the context in which it is placed. Norenzayan and Nisbett (2000) refer to these instances as field dependence, or “a relative difficulty in separating objects from the context in which they are located” (p. 134).

To further explain field dependence, Nisbett conducted two tests to prove that:

a. Westerners are more likely to recognize characteristics of individual elements within an environment, and

b. Easterners surmise object definition and meaning through surrounding contextual components.

Nisbett’s first illustrated test, conducted by former student Taka Masuda, aims to show differences in contextual awareness between Eastern and Western cultures. Masuda believed that “Asians view the world through a wide-angle lens, whereas Westerners have tunnel vision” (Nisbett, 2003, p. 89). To test his hypothesis, he showed eight animated underwater scenes to selected subjects (replications of scenes illustrated in Figure 2), each displaying fish all characterized by different elements such as color, size, and speed. The background was representative of a realistic underwater scene and included plants, fish, rocks, and bubbles.
Masuda chose both Japanese students (from Kyoto University) and American students (from the University of Michigan) to participate in his study. Students were shown the underwater animation twice, each viewing lasting twenty seconds. End results of testing supported Masuda’s hypothesis:

- A relatively similar amount of American and Japanese students referenced some aspect of the centralized fish, however the Japanese students made 60% more reference to background objects found in the animation.

- The Japanese students were more apt to refer to the animation and its elements as “in the pond” (full context), where as the American students specifically pointed out the centralized fish and the characteristics of that fish (Nisbett, 2003, p. 90).
The second test described by Nisbett involves a study conducted in conjunction with Masuda. This test aimed to prove that Westerners are more blind to changes in a contextual background (as well as changes in relationship to objects) than Easterners. Again, both Japanese and American participants were shown nearly identical film clips (Figure 3), and the subjects were asked to note the differences found in each. Differentiating items in version one and version two include:

- The rotor on the helicopters,
- The relationship in distance between the helicopter and the small plane on the left, and
- The tower in the back left of the composition (both are completely different in architectural design).

*Figure 3: Recognition Test Between Eastern and Western Cultures: Background vs. Foreground.*

What Nisbett and Masuda found was that the Japanese participants recognized considerably more changes within the background of the two film clips, where the American participants noticed more changes within foreground objects.
Another important study conducted by Masuda, Mequita, Tanida, Ellsworth, Len, and Van de Veerdonk (2008) published in the article, “Placing the Face in Context: Cultural Differences in the Perception of Facial Emotion,” looks at differences in the interpreted meaning of an individual’s facial expression in relationship to the subject’s given social context. In this study, American students (University of Michigan) and Japanese students (Kyoto University) were shown two cartoon videos displaying groups of people expressing different emotions. Each video was twenty seconds in length and illustrated a centralized individual, as well as supporting background characters, expressing distinct emotions. These emotions consistently changed throughout the duration of the two clips. Figure 4 illustrates snapshots of each of the videos shown:

![Figure 4: Emotional Recognition Between Cultures in Accordance to Social Context.](image)

The findings of this study strongly support ideals of individualism versus collectivism, as well how different cultures derive meaning from social context: 72% of the Japanese participants felt emotions of the centralized person were influenced by those of the supporting background characters, while 72% of the American students reported the
emotions of the centralized figure were not indicative of the emotions shown in the background characters (pp. 368–370). In summary, “Westerners see emotions as individual feelings, whereas Japanese see them as inseparable from the feelings of the group” (Masuda et al, 2008, p. 365).

Through discussion of the five important dimensions defined by Hofstede, combined with the supplemental studies conducted by Nisbett and Masuda, we are now able to understand the incredible diversity which exists between cultures. A better understanding regarding these differences in thinking, beliefs, and traditions gives us pause to consider how important this cultural knowledge can be in planning visual communication for culturally diverse global audiences.

2.6 Image Construction Through Cultural Dimension

When it comes to visual communication, the use of imagery plays an important role within a design. According to author Ronnie Lipton (2002), it is within the first few seconds of seeing a design or advertisement that the viewer chooses to either participate with the message or simply ignore it (p. 9). The image, not the verbal word, is seen first and is the powerful force which catches a person’s attention. It is “the images that make a viewer decide even whether to to read a word” (Lipton, 2002, p. 9). According to professors Gaurav Bansal and Fatemeh Zahedi from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (2006), “Images . . . are more than mere objects; they highlight cultural phenomena and convey social meanings” (p. 1285). An understanding of how to use an image, the elements within an image, and correct environmental context is vital to proper audience messaging.
Proper image usage also relates to Hofstede’s cultural dimensions. The foundations of image interpretation and meaning are a function of the underlying ideals and beliefs of social societies. These beliefs play a tremendous role in preparing and interpreting visual messaging. Bansal and Zahedi (2006) conducted research on specific cultural signifiers found within global service websites geared toward serving the public (universities, hospitals, and banks). To ensure they were accurately testing websites and imagery indicative of a specific culture, Bansal and Zahedi focused on sites written in the country’s native language (p. 1286). Bansal and Zahedi studied in detail the images found on these websites and ultimately connected their findings to three of Hofstede’s dimensions: masculinity versus femininity, power distance, and individualism versus collectivism. Their findings are listed below:

1. **Masculinity versus Femininty:**

   As previously explained, masculine cultures focus more on males being dominant and tough while females are expected to be more tender and gentle. In feminine cultures, it is more acceptable for both genders to display feminine traits. The following image attributes are common according to a masculine versus feminine society:

   **a. Masculine Cultures:**

   - Men are the main focus and more dominantly portrayed in images.
   - Men are often shown in authoritative roles. When women are shown in the image, they are shown alone with very little authority.
   - Men are rarely shown smiling.
• Men are often shown in formal attire, where women are shown in casual dress.
• Colors used within an image are dark and serious.
• Men are shown with objects that indicate wealth and that convey status.

b. Feminine Cultures:
• Females are mostly shown in images.
• Females are portrayed as the authoritative gender.
• There is no distinctive rank between genders.
• Positive emotion is shown through smiling.
• Family and relationships are strong focal points within an image.
• Bright colors are commonly used, and women are shown in more formal dress.
• Women are shown with status objects (pp. 1287–1288).

The following examples clearly illustrate the diversity found in masculine versus feminine imagery:
Figure 5: Examples of Feminine and Masculine Imagery.

As shown in the masculine images, one specific male plays a centralized, dominant role. In contrast, the feminine images depict females as the centralized image, while also showing more interaction within the group.

2. **Power Distance:**

To reiterate, power distance is an understanding of lines drawn between social strata. In high power distance cultures, a distinct line separates superior and inferior. In low power distance societies, individuals are treated more as equals. The following image attributes pertain to power distance societies:

a. **High Power Distance Cultures:**

- An obvious hierarchy exists within the image where persons are shown with clear distinctions of authority.
• When representing groups of people, a distinct leader is apparent and an obvious distance exists between the powerful and the subordinate.
• Poses are formal, facial expressions show authority, and people look at the audience with direct gazes.
• Dress is formal, and focus lies specifically on one person (the leader, which can be male or female).

b. Low Power Distance Cultures:
• There is no obvious hierarchy and no specific authoritative person is apparent.
• Group images show individuals as equals; there is no specific person with control over the others.
• Individual poses are casual, groups are not involved in any specific task, and casual attire is worn (Bansal & Zahedi, 2006, pp. 1288–1289).

3. Individualism versus Collectivism:

Individualistic cultures focus on the person standing out from society (through actions such as dress and status), where collectivistic cultures focus on the individual as he or she pertains to the in-group (for example, being in harmony with peers). The following image types are relevant to each specific culture:

a. Individualistic Cultures:
• Only one individual is represented.
• If a group exists, focus is on one individual only.
• When showing groups, individuals are rarely shown communicating – rather they all look in opposing directions.

b. Collectivistic Cultures:

• Only groups of people are shown, and all participants interact with each other and gaze in the same direction.
• Families and the in-group are emphasized.
• Common tasks such as working on a job, walking, and even competing are shown as group interactions (Bansal & Zahedi, 2006, pp. 1290–1291).

The following examples clearly illustrate the diversity found by comparing individualistic and collectivistic imagery:

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<thead>
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<th>Bank-Mexico</th>
<th>Hospital-Costa Rica</th>
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*Figure 6: Examples of Individualistic and Collectivistic Imagery.*
While Basal and Zahedi focused on still imagery for their study, the same rules are still relevant and applicable to visual communications media that incorporate motion (such as television) or interaction (such as websites).

### 2.7 Image and Background Context

In preparing effective messaging for intended audiences, background information and/or depicted environmental context can be just as important as the transmission of foreground information. A reoccurring idea throughout these cultural studies involves individualistic versus collectivistic cultures and their relationship to surrounding context. In Western cultures, man is viewed as separate from nature. In Eastern cultures, man is integrated (oftentimes becoming one) with nature and his surroundings: “Complex visual images . . . can be better processed by members of collectivistic cultures who are more used to deriving meaning from context, than by members of individualistic cultures who are more used to simple visual images that carry explicit meaning” (de Mooij, 2004, p. 207).

Furthermore, the placement of an individual within an image is just as important as the context of the message. Western cultures are more likely to place emphasis on the image’s foreground (where the individual is also positioned), and Eastern cultures are more likely to
mix individuals or groups into the environmental context, making them part of the whole (Masuda et. al, 2008, p. 1266).

The environmental setting in which an individual or a group is shown is also essential for proper message communication. One must be aware of using background imagery that is too strong for an individualistic society – it could easily take meaning away from the message being relayed in the foreground. In contrast, context is vital when creating visual communication for collectivistic cultures. Remember that collectivistic cultures have “context-sensitive attention,” where field information is just as important as the individual or group and helps to relay the overall message (Masuda et al., 2008, p. 1272).

Equally important to visual communication is the fact that background image and context do not always have the same meaning in all cultures. What might be considered an exciting, relaxing, or positive environment for individualistic cultures (for example, a beach setting) could have a totally different meaning for a collectivistic culture. As Doctor of Communications Marieke De Mooij (2004) explains:

Collectivists have difficulties understanding the emotion properly outside the context.

. . . An example of background used in such studies is a beach, which is not culture free. Whereas a beach to Westerners is a place to relax, to play active sport, or have fun and adventure, in Asian countries it has different connotations. It is associated with many different activities and events, vary from special celebrations or funerals, to taking wedding pictures, to even use as a public toilet. So a beach is likely to be associated with different emotional events (p. 150).
The way a human individual is portrayed, both in physicality and facial expression, is another factor affecting how messages are received by varying cultural audiences. Taking the female appearance as an example, the individualist culture requires a woman to stand out from the rest of society. This can be done by style of dress or even the make-up worn. Additionally, while all humans experience physical attraction to others, the definition of attractiveness varies greatly between societies. This is apparent in the differences between standard female appearances in a Western, individualistic culture compared to an Eastern, collectivistic culture. In America, ideal women are thin and beautiful. Combine these elements with evidence of independence and an offering of sexy facial expressions and the formula for individualistic visual communication has been achieved. However, in order to visually communicate attractiveness in Japan, the ideal female model would be youthful in appearance, emphasize dependence on others, and convey happiness through smile or laughter (de Mooij, 2004, p. 111). Furthermore, moving to the extreme opposite end of the beauty spectrum, Asian audiences are more likely to respond to “less glamorous, more wholesome, more real-looking faces” (Lipton, 2002, p. 148).

Consideration of facial expression is another facet important to visual communication, and choosing to utilize it (and the context in which to use it) often depends on specific cultures and dimensions. For example, the use of facial expressions in individualist cultures is important because it helps to relay specific messages (refer back to the information regarding Figure 4). Caution is required, however, when images show gestural forms of expression in collectivistic Asian cultures. In Japan, for example, winking is perceived as a form of rudeness (Lipton, 2002, p. 132). Uncertainty avoidance is another dimension that affects communication interpretation through facial expression. In low
uncertainty avoidance cultures (where openly showing emotion is unaccepted), persons rely on the reading of facial expressions to understand how a person is feeling (de Mooij, 2004, p. 151).

Facial recognition is also important when communicating with specific target audiences. According to de Mooij (2004), “It should be important for advertisers to select not only the right expression, but also the right face” (p. 152). To successfully transmit a message to an intended audience, one must keep in mind the ethnicity of the audience or audiences the message will reach. De Mooij has demonstrated that facial recognition can be specific to ethnic groups, especially those with whom the viewer is able to most easily identify:

Several groups – for example Tongans and Koreans – cannot associate easily with pictures of European faces. New Zealand Europeans can better associate brands with photographs that are similar to themselves. Also, Koreans identify more closely with Korean photographs if they have the appropriate expression (de Mooij, 2004, p. 158).

Finally, nudity within imagery is another area of visual communication which carries different levels of acceptance and meaning from culture to culture. While the United States considers any form of publicized and/or advertised nudity as strictly taboo, other countries do not find this to be problematic: “In some cultures, nudity is related to sex, whereas in others nudity symbolizes purity or beauty” (de Mooij, 2004, p. 122). In German culture, for example, advertising female nudity is not felt to be exploitive or degrading because the bare female body is considered a celebration of a woman’s beauty. France also commonly
incorporates nudity into their visual communication design for the same reason. These differences demonstrate that there are strong dichotomies separating cultural societies into specific dimensions – masculine societies strongly oppose nudity as expression, where feminine cultures are more accepting (Hofstede, 2005, p. 136).

2.8 Consumption and Behavior by Cultural Dimension

Cultural beliefs, behaviors, and dimensions greatly contribute to the consumption habits of all societies. Doctor of Communications, Marieke de Mooij, has spent time thoroughly researching how Hofstede’s five cultural dimensions affect consumer behavior and has discovered the following:

1. Power Distance

Status recognition and human dependence are strong influences on consumer behavior. For example, children in high power distance cultures (where a strong need for dependence on others exists) rely more on their parents for purchasing decisions than do children in low power distance cultures. On the other hand, consumers in low power distance cultures are more likely to purchase a game or activity where there is interaction between individuals. For example, in Denmark (a low power distance culture), the game Legos (which was also designed in Denmark) is a popular parent/child interaction game where the two can work together, and allows the child to learn how to build with blocks. However, high uncertainty avoidance cultures shy away from such interaction. Legos are quite unpopular in France (a high power distance culture) because there is absolutely no interest in such an activity (de Mooij, 2004, p. 159).
2. Individualistic versus Collectivistic:

Individualistic cultures are proud cultures – and also very materialistic. Therefore, successful visual communication means flaunting that which helps ensure or show off individual successes, which will make one more beautiful than the other, and that which will “enhance their ‘ideal self’ image” (de Mooij, 2004, p. 100). Monetary objects such as large homes, expensive cars, and lavish vacations immediately convey wealth and prosperity in individualistic cultures. Furthermore, luxurious clothes, jewelry, make-up, and the latest surgical procedures to conceal aging are all seen as necessary to an individual’s sense of self and self-worth.

Collectivistic cultures, however, are post-materialistic, placing emphasis on the quality of life and a person’s central existence around the “whole” (de Mooij, 2004, p. 119). In other words, the subject in the foreground cannot exist without the (contextual) background elements. Furthermore, the livelihood, emotional well-being, and individual’s status is directly related to the family or in-group and plays a large role in the consumption behaviors of a collectivistic culture. Remember back to the fish in Figure 1. In a collectivistic culture, that specific fish could not exist without the surrounding plants, rocks, and water. The same holds true for any visual consumption message aimed towards a collectivistic culture. What does the surrounding environment have to say about the desires of the individual in the foreground? How does that message entice the consumer? Does the product or design follow the ideals of the in-group? Does it allow the individual a sense of peace and harmony? For example, gestures of gift-giving to other members of the in-group are highly prioritized, not only because they are considered an act of generosity, but also
because kindness to others is considered as giving a gift to themselves. Ergo, the individual ensures their own peace and harmony by making other members of the in-group happy.

The group also dictates the purchasing habits of its members, and “consumption patterns show dependence on others” (Hofstede, 2005, p. 97). Purchasing trends in clothing styles, popularity of specific consumer products, chosen entertainment, and popular food chains and restaurants all have one thing in common: the “be like others appeal” (de Mooij, 2004, pp. 162–164). Understanding this appeal is vital within visual communication; after all, representing an individual disconnected from his surrounding environment in a collectivistic culture would be considered a major faux-pas: “A commercial where a guy breaks out from a group and starts doing something on his own that the group hasn’t thought of would be seen as positive in the individualistic cultures of the West, but negative in collectivistic Asian cultures” (de Mooij, 2004, p. 102).

Individualism versus collectivism also plays a strong role in understanding youth consumption. Where “the promotion of products based on the typical youth themes of rebellion, individuality, freedom, confidence, sexiness” would gain emotional appeal with Western (individualistic) audiences, it “may communicate very little to teenagers in Asia” (de Mooij, 2004, p. 126). Showing a teenager with his or her own self-expression has a strong appeal to teens in individualistic cultures – but showing individual self-expression in a collectivistic culture (where style and popularity is defined within the in-group) would be problematic for any form of visual communication.
3. **Masculine versus Feminine:**

Needs and incentives are factors which motivate consumer behavior in masculine and feminine cultures. The more masculine a culture, the more “desire” initiates a purchase. The more feminine a culture, the more “need” comes into play.

Like individualistic socities, masculine cultures are mostly interested in the status quo, and consumption behavior largely revolves around items that will enhance the ideal of one’s status, achievements, and accomplishments (de Mooij, 2004, p. 139–141). Masculine cultures are more likely to purchase expensive, materialistic items such as cars and jewelry, and are more apt to spend money on leisure items and vacations for pleasure. Feminine cultures, on the other hand, are more focused on purchasing items that have purpose within the home. They are more interested in partaking in “do-it-yourself” tasks such as building and carpentry or sewing their own clothes. Interestingly, masculine cultures (who crave factual data) read more nonfiction literature, where fiction is most popular in feminine cultures.

Gender roles also play an important part in purchasing behavior in masculine and feminine cultures. In masculine cultures, men dominate large purchases, such as high power items (i.e. cars). Women, on the other hand, are expected to shop for necessary household items such as food. However in feminine socities, both man and woman share the role in all purchasing – men include their wives in car purchases, and unlike masculine cultures, families usually only own one vehicle. Furthermore, it is customary for the men to do the majority of the food shopping in feminine cultures (Hofstede, 2005, pp. 140–142).
4. Uncertainty Avoidance:

Uncertainty avoidance is an important dimension affecting cultural consumer behavior. Differences in attitudes and feelings regarding such issues as cleanliness, health, and reliability play a large roll in what types of products will be purchased worldwide. As stated by de Mooij (2004), “The need for purity is manifested in different ways and related to the product categories food, drink, and cleaning products” (p. 142).

High uncertainty avoidance cultures are incredibly concerned about health, purity, and cleanliness – therefore mineral water (as opposed to simple tap water) is most commonly consumed. Furthermore, more fresh fruit, pure sugar, and unprocessed foods are purchased in greater volume by those in high uncertainty avoidance cultures. Also typical in countries with high uncertainty avoidance is the need for cleanliness, which results in a heightened use of personal, household, and clothes cleaning products. Product safety is also important to high uncertainty avoidance cultures. Countries rated high on this scale are more likely to purchase new cars as opposed to used. Additionally, businesses are more likely to use professionals or experts when advertising their product in order to ensure its “purity” or “quality,” which serves to validate its trustworthy service.

Low uncertainty avoidance cultures (which are not as concerned with purity) are more attracted to the idea of convenience. Fast food, frozen meals, frozen goods, and packaged convenience foods are all popular items. With regard to personal hygiene products, these cultures are less concerned with purity and more interested in beauty products that enhance self-image. Low uncertainty avoidance cultures are also more trusting of products and more likely to purchase and utilize items such as used cars and new technologies (i.e. internet and email) (Hofstede, 2005, p. 180).
Clothing, in both type and style, are also relative to uncertainty avoidance. The more uncertain the culture, the greater the need to follow the trends of the society in which they belong. These individuals are less likely to branch out, set a new style, or go against a societal trend due to their fear of unknown reactions. In contrast, the more certain a culture, the more individuals will experiment with their own fashion and the more societies are accepting of new looks and styles (de Mooij, 2004, p. 171).

5. *Long-term versus Short-term Orientation:*

Long-term versus short-term orientation may not have as many ramifications as the other dimensions, but it has a significance all of its own. Because of the distinction between living in the here-and-now versus saving for the future, long-term versus short-term orientation is essential to understanding consumer behavior. According to the article, “Convergence and Divergence in Consumer Behavior: Implications for International Retailing,” long-term orientation cultures are less likely to use credit cards than short-term orientation cultures (because of the increased financial loss that accrues with “borrowing” money). They are more likely to purchase items themselves as opposed to having merchandise shipped to their door, and are interested in promotions or opportunities which allow for long-term savings and profit gains (de Mooij & Hofstede, 2002, p. 66).

Short-term orientation cultures, however, are primarily interested in immediate gains, instant monetary availability, and convenience. Credit cards are ideal for these cultures because of the “swipe now, pay later” advantage. Furthermore, short-term orientation cultures are more likely to have merchandise delivered to their door or purchase items
outside of the store for convenience – for example online, through a catalog, or off the television.

**2.9 Cultural Sensitivity**

Certain collectivistic cultures (where tradition and values reign supreme) are highly sensitive when it comes to particular consumer products, and it is not uncommon for restrictions to be placed on advertising an item if it is believed the product will cause public health problems (Taylor and Raymond, 2000, p. 288). For instance:

- Federal law bans cigarette advertising in the People’s Republic of China (PRC).
- Advertising cigarettes in Japan is accepted if geared towards the male audience, but communication directed toward the female audience is forbidden.
- While advertising alcoholic beverages in the PRC is legal, advertising any product with a 40 percent alcohol content or higher is forbidden. Furthermore, other restrictions on alcoholic advertising include “not using comparisons, not using national symbols, and not using superlatives or puffery.” An example of this issue occurred when Anheuser Busch was forced to supply statistical numbers to back up their advertising statement: “America’s favorite beer.”
- The only pharmaceutical advertisements which are allowed in the PRC are those that benefit a person’s mental or physical health. Furthermore, they must specify the product’s price, manufacturer, and exact function.
• While the advertising of alcohol is allowed in South Korea, messages which promote any harmful effects to the public, such as drinking to relieve stress or for social status, is forbidden.

• The advertisement of pharmaceuticals in South Korea must be one hundred percent truthful about the product, may not misinform with regard to performance, and cannot cause any unnecessary fear (such as side effect information).

• Advertising undergarments in South Korea is only allowed with the following exceptions: absolutely no sexy images can be represented, and there shall be no reference or emphasizing sexual organs or body parts. In other words, only advertisements which are clean and tasteful are allowed (Taylor and Raymond, 2000, pp. 291–298).

2.10 Culture and Graphic Design

As we begin to understand how existing cultures and dimensions help define our world, it becomes important to recognize how these differences affect the meaning and practice of graphic design. In order for designers to properly communicate visual messaging, they must first understand that their own individual ways of thinking do not represent those of the rest of the world. Taking into consideration the beliefs, traditions, and values of varying cultural audiences has yet to become a common practice, and some of the people currently responsible for the production of visual communication are unaware of this obligation. In fact, incorporating American ideals and customs into global design has become a regular occurrence. According to de Mooij (2004):
Many international marketing managers are convinced that their own ideas or practices represent universal wisdom and try to impose them on everybody. Most global advertising agencies and many multinational companies have Anglo-American management. Their universalism makes them focus on the similarities and ignore the differences (p. 12).

This “universal” problem is better defined as cultural imperialism, where one nation (whether purposefully or unknowingly) attempts to incorporate their own cultural practices and beliefs into societies different than their own (Snow, 2002, p. 29). As stated by author Carolyn McCarron (2003), “American corporate executives don’t always invest the time and funding to carefully tailor their communications to respect specific cultures and their beliefs” (p. 18). We cannot place full blame solely on executives, however – as design professionals, it is also our responsibility to ensure accuracy in global communication. If we continue to “act globally but think locally,” not only will improper messaging result in an unreceptive response from the receiving audience, but imposing one’s design and marketing ethics on different cultures can result in catastrophic outcomes (McCarron, 2003, p. 21).

An example of one such occurrence lies with the American fast food company, McDonalds. According to an article published by China Daily (2005), McDonalds aired a television commercial campaign during 2005 in China which showed a Chinese man kneeling to a McDonalds’ employee asking them to honor an expired coupon. The advertisement continued to address the audience, reassuring them not to fear expiration dates of McDonalds coupons because they ultimately remain valid for a year. The idea seemed simple enough: reassure your customers they can continue to use their McDonalds’ coupons
for discounted items even if a coupon shows a passed expiration date. However, instead of reading McDonalds’ harmless intended message, Chinese viewers were greatly insulted and offended by what they saw in the commercial (para. 1–2). McDonalds was immediately asked to remove the commercial from all airwaves. As quoted by an angry Chinese consumer, “What a shame that the commercial portrayed Chinese consumers as willing to bend to such a petty interest” (as cited by China Daily, 2005, para. 5).

What McDonalds failed to take into consideration when developing this advertisement were China’s collectivistic, highly masculine cultural dimensions. By showing the customer kneeling to the employee, not only did McDonalds convey the message of social inequality and individual weakness through “begging”, but it also degraded the uniformity and harmony which are an important component of a collectivistic culture.

2.11 Color and Culture

Not only are cultural dimensions important when understanding proper visual communication, but so to is the use of color. Color is one of the most expressive and meaningful aspects of human life. It entices. It signifies feeling, status, and livelihood. Color has the ability to provoke emotions. It even has the ability to provoke appetite. However, what a specific color might mean to one country or culture could mean something completely different to another. For example, where the color red might represent warning or danger to one culture (America), it could have more positive connotations to another (Asia), such as good luck, fortune, and fertility. Additionally, where the color yellow might symbolically represent cowardace, caution, and cheap to one culture (America), it can represent high ranking authority to another (West Africa). And while one culture might use
the color white to represent cleanliness and purity (America), in another culture (such as Asia) it stands to represent death and mourning. In fact, white is the common color worn to funerals (Peterson & Cullen, 2000, pp. 9 – 176). (Detailed list of basic colors and cultural meaning, Appendix A).

Failing to understand these differences can result in catastrophic advertising and marketing campaigns. For example, when the (global) company Hertz Rent–A–Car introduced their #1 Gold Club to customers in the early 1990s, a mailer containing membership information was sent to those who recently signed up for this new service. Hertz’s corporate colors are black and gold, and in order to relate this promotional material with their branding image, the mailer membership information was sent via an enclosed black envelope. While this campaign was successful in the United States and Europe, the outcomes were disastrous when presented to Japanese customers. Where the presentation of a black envelope received in the mail may have no immediate symbolic meaning to an American or European, in Japan it signifies the announcement of a death in the family (McCarron, 2003, p. 21). As quoted by Ashmita Goswami, the senior strategist for Razorfish, “Japanese citizens were extremely upset thinking they were receiving horrible news and instead they found a membership for Hertz’s Gold Club” (as cited in McCarron, 2003, p. 21).

On the other hand, understanding these important differences also have the ability to enhance a corporate brand and the success of their product. Although its competitive counterpart bares a red iconic packaging design, PepsiCo Inc. made an executive decision in 2008 to change their Chinese distributed can to the same color (Figure 8). The idea was not to compete with Coca-Cola, rather to use it as a promotional tool to support Team China in
the 2008 Olympic games (Chao & McKay, 2007, para. 1–3). Additionally, red is incredibly important to the Chinese culture: not only does it relate to their national flag, but as previously discussed, red denotes good luck and celebration. PepsiCo Inc. understood this and successfully incorporated these ideals holistically through the change in color. As supported by BevMark’s Mr. Pirko, “If you’re going to a party you wear the right clothes, and the right clothes in China are red” (as cited in Chao & McKay, 2007, para. 23).

![Figure 8: Left: Pepsi Team China 2008 Olympic Design; Right: Standard Pepsi America.](image)

Changing China’s can to red is not the first time Pepsi has manipulated the standard American blue color to fit the contexts of an intended country or cultural audience. In 2006, they ran a promotional campaign in Brazil, changing the can to yellow and green, which are the country’s national colors (Chao & McKay, 2007, para. 18).
2.12 Semiotics, Symbology, and Culture

Just as it is important to understand color meaning as it pertains to various cultures, so too is the idea of semiotics, for “in every culture, mass communication depends to a great extent on signs and symbols” (Miller, Brown, & Cullen, 2000, p. 7). Therefore, if global visual communication is to be effective, it is imperative that the designer fully understands these important components of design.

Semiotics, or “the theory of how different signs are constituted and classified according to their uses and interpretations,” is vital to all forms of visual communication (Nadin & Zakida, 1994, p. 3). The use of semiotics allows us to break down visual and image meaning into many forms, including iconic, indexic, and symbolic. Iconography revolves around the idea of likeness – that is, does a person recognize the object as the true object that it is? Examples of famous American icons might include The Beatles, Bill Clinton, or Elvis – people, regardless of age, easily recognize these individuals for who they are, and rarely without question. Indexing, on the other hand, refers to an understanding of an object’s actions or existence by the physical marks left by said object. Take, for example, an image of a lone line of footprints in the sand, on a beach, next to the ocean. There may be no human present within this specific image, but through our previous knowledge and powers of deduction, we understand that someone was there and left those footprints. Finally, symbolism refers to the common way a society represents a certain object or idea. These symbols carry important meanings to given audiences, but very well may not be universally the same. For example, Victorian homes, the automobile, and individual success are all symbolic of the “American Dream” (Nadin & Zakida, 1994, pp. 67–100). However to other countries, their symbolic ideals of “dreams” and “goals” might be totally different.
To put the ideas of icon, index, and symbology to use, let us go back to the Pepsi China example and dissect it into the three forms of semiotics listed above. The Pepsi can is iconic because we recognize it as a physical Pepsi can and through the corporation’s brand and logo. The sweat marks on the can (or the potential sweat ring left on a table after the can is removed) is indexical – and often times indexical for Pepsi’s “refreshing” stature. Lastly, in its original form, the blue color of the can is symbolic to the product because as consumers, we associate that specific color with that specific brand. However, when Pepsi changed its packaging to red in 2008, it completely changed the brand’s symbolic messaging; because red signifies celebration in China, the can now symbolically stood to support and celebrate China’s participation in the 2008 Summer Olympics.

With all of this in mind, we begin to see how important semiotics is to the field of visual communication. Furthermore, it is vital that graphic designers understand that what maybe be iconic, indexic, or symbolic to one culture might have completely different meanings to another – especially in regards to symbology. Symbolic formation is a strong visually communicative component to many worldwide cultures, and one cannot assume specific symbols are universally understood. For example, although Western cultures view the large, dangerous Anaconda to be a threat to human life, certain cultures value the reptiles as a symbolic representation of their existence. For Brazilians, the Anaconda is worshiped, for it represents their earth; to Africans, it represents the earth and rain; and in China, the Anaconda is symbolic for weath. The Phoenix is another symbolic icon that is important to certain global cultures. To the Romans, the Phoenix is a powerful sign of immortality and the renewal of life; to the Russians, it represents romance and goodness; and to the Jewish
culture, the Phoenix is strongly symbolic for human survival (Miller, Brown, & Cullen, 2000, pp. 10 – 151). (Detailed list of symbols and cultural meaning, Appendix B).

The subject of image, color, and symbolic understanding across cultures is too broad a topic to cover fully in the present study. What remains significant are the differences in interpretations according to colors, images, and symbols and that these differences are extremely important in preparing visual communication for a global society. Additionally, minimal amounts of research exist in the area of culturally specific interpretations of color and symbolism in the graphic design field, and the specific research conducted by Miller, Brown, & Cullen, and Peterson & Cullen were derived mostly through advertisement analysis. This current situation limits the ability of designers to address the full scope of the issue. However one thing remains fact and needs to be fully understood – not one culture carries the same ideals and beliefs as any other culture. This constitutes a hazard to effective visual communication that must be watched closely.

2.13 American Sub-Cultures

Not only is it important for graphic designers to be educated in worldwide cultural studies, but also important to understand differences in American sub-cultures. Where there are no researched dimensions specifically related to African American and Hispanic-American culture (although many attributes do closely follow Hofstede’s dimensions), certain ideals, beliefs, and characteristics clearly define them.
1. African Americans:

Continuing along the lines of western individualistic cultures deeply rooted in pride, success, and status, African Americans also find these attributes important. However, there are more feminine qualities to their culture that emphasize the success of women in important social and business roles. Affluency in career and personal life are important to all African Americans, as are the “core essentials” of church and family (Lipton, 2002, p. 76). Furthermore, as stated by author Ronnie Lipton (2002) in “Designing Across Cultures,” dignity, respect, education, and health are also very important to the African American culture (p. 68).

As with global audiences, African Americans find specific meaning in image, color, and symbolism. Historical events (such as slavery) – while ultimately symbolic of freedom – are never referenced in visual communication. Showing a black woman serving food, for example, is highly disrespectful to the audience. Furthermore, because of pride, the struggle for success, as well as the individual’s appearance (being physically fit, beautiful, and wearing the latest styles of clothing), is highly important to African Americans.

Other symbolically important components of the African American culture include social gatherings (in the church, with family, or simply with friends), which are “something we’re proud of” and highly celebrated within the community. Personal dignity is also important to African Americans – showing foolishness or goofing-off contradicts their desire to keep face within the community.

In visual communication, darker-skinned models are preferred over lighter-skinned models. Referencing history, lighter-skinned African Americans were those who worked inside the house on a plantation, where darker-skinned African Americans provided the
harder labor outdoors. Although light versus dark does not represent the individual’s work ethic today, darker-skin is still more highly regarded. Furthermore, showing the model’s gaze directed towards an audience is always meaningful because it helps represent truth and seriousness (Lipton, 2002, pp. 70–81).

Generally speaking, preferred color palettes are similar to those of the American public – however there is a select range of colors specifically more preferred by African American audiences. Warm colors tend to be admired (and therefore used more often) because they relate to skin tone. However in the long run, it is wise to use color palettes related to a design’s subject matter rather than for a specific cultural ideology.

2. **Hispanic-Americans:**

Hispanic-Americans continue to be a collectivistic culture, however they have adopted some westernized masculine attributes. According to Lipton, the family is first priority for Hispanic-Americans – the father is the superior household member and the mother is the primary care giver. She will go to great lengths to ensure her family is properly cared for. According to Ed Flores of Bromley Communications, “It’s unique to Hispanic audiences that the woman wants to feel ‘tranquila’,” – in other words, mothers want the “peace of mind that she’s taking good care of her family” (as cited in Lipton, 2002, p. 26). Extended family is also very important to the (collectivistic) Hispanic-American culture, where grandparents play an active role in the family life, including chores, shopping, and helping care for and raise the children. Oftentimes, the grandparents will also share a residence with their children and grandchildren.
The church and community are also very important to Hispanic-Americans, and are celebrated through music, festivals, social gatherings, and sports (specifically soccer) (Lipton, 2002, p. 24).

As with global audiences, Hispanic-Americans find specific meaning in image, color, and symbolism. Model-casting for Hispanic-American advertising is similar to practices for other cultures around the world: the audience will relate more to models who are authentic or have distinct facial recognition. Additionally, Hispanic-Americans (unlike their European-American counterparts) celebrate full-figured bodies and will oftentimes shun or criticize messages that do not properly represent their figures. Finally, models should also have a friendly, welcoming appearance (Lipton, 2002, pp. 52–53).

Because language barriers often keep Hispanic-Americans from understanding advertising verbiage, image or product representation is key. Although Americans believe items such as sombreros, pinatas, and the chihuahua are popular Hispanic-American iconography, in reality, these are strong cliches: they “not only don’t convey relevancy to your audience, they’re likely to have the opposite effect . . . [showing] that the designer didn’t take the time to look beyond the surface” (Lipton, 2002, p. 19). Color use, on the other hand, should be bright and vibrant. Earthtones (such as browns and brick/clay reds), blues, oranges, and yellow are visually appealing to the Hispanic-American audience.

Understandably, certain symbols carry distinct meaning to the Hispanic-American culture. Power is symbolized by the sun, and nature symbols such as blue skies, fields, and palm trees are extremely popular. Using a heart strikes emotional chords with Hispanic-Americans because it symbolizes the importance of family. Combine a heart with a mother
figure to further emphasize family. In contrast, yellow flowers represent the mourning or death of a loved one. Red flowers symbolize a curse (Lipton, 2002, pp. 30–41).

Just as designers should properly research cultural implications of visual communications intended for global audiences, they also must take care to understand the preferences, beliefs, and attitudes of local African American and Hispanic-American subcultures.
3.1 Verizon Wireless: A Mini-Case Study

To show the compositional and communicative differences that exist within culture-specific messaging, as well as the need for cultural studies integration into higher education graphic design programs, in-depth analysis of an existing corporation’s cross-cultural advertising is required. Verizon Communications (with a subset of Verizon Wireless) is one such company who recognizes their culturally diverse consumer demographic, and the company’s advertising directed toward such audiences serves these analytic purposes.

Because Verizon Communications is “a leader in wireless voice and data services” (Verizon Wireless, 2010, para. 2), advertising understandably plays a large role in Verizon’s communication to their consumers, which allows for an ample amount of cultural content available for examination. This specific visual communication analysis includes Verizon’s advertisement messaging directed toward two specific local audiences: their American audience (Verizon Wireless) and their Asian-American consumer audiences (Verizon Communications. The specific print advertising analyzed includes:
A Verizon Wireless advertisement designed for an American audience:

*Figure 9: Verizon Wireless Iobi Advertisement: American Audience.*
And four Verizon Communications advertisements designed for Asian-American audiences:

*Figure 10 (left): Korean-American Audience; Figure 11 (right): Filipino-American Audience.*

*Figure 12 (left): Japanese-American Audience; Figure 13 (right): Chinese-American Audience.*
Each of these Asian-American advertisements were created by a New York/Los Angeles based firm called “AdAsia,” which consists of a creative team with “a thorough knowledge of the Asian American tradition and culture” (AdAsia, 2005, para. 2). Although individually focused on different Asian cultural sub-categories (Korean, Filipino, Japanese, and Chinese), each advertisement has been created with specific communicative messages of celebration and success, both of which are important to each of these designated cultures (and therefore celebration and success through Verizon Communication and its products and services). While the Korean-American advertisement speaks of celebrating one’s talents and volunteering in ways they can best contribute to society and the “whole,” the Filipino-American advertisement talks of celebrating the New Year with new savings, the Japanese-American speaks of celebrating a new year and continued successes through using Verizon Wireless products and services, and the Chinese-American advertisements sends messaging of prosperity, riches, and successful surpluses for the many years to come.

According to John Lee, AdAsia Media Director, each advertisement ran in publications geared toward their respective audiences. In 2005, four insertions of the Korean–American advertisement ran in each the Korea Daily and Korea Times, publications circulating in the Los Angeles and New York markets (circulations: Korea Times, Los Angeles – 85,000; Korea Times, New York – 45,000; Korea Daily, Los Angeles – 80,000; Korea Daily, New York – 35,000). In 2003, two insertions of the Filipino–American advertisement ran in each bi-monthly publications of the Fil–AM Courier and Hawaii Filipino Chronicle (circulations: Fil-Am Courier – 25,000; Hawaii Filipino Chronicle – 22,000). In 2003, two insertions of the Japanese–American advertisement ran in each publication of the daily Hawaii Hochi and the tri-monthly Hawaii Pacific Press (circulations:
Hawaii Hochi – 6,500; Hawaii Pacific Press – 6,000). Finally, in 2003, the Chinese-American message ran via billboards and displayed in Flushing/Chinatown, New York (no circulation numbers were provided).

After cross-referencing and compiling information through a Cultural Design Components Maxtrix (Appendix C), we can begin to see the large differences within the cultural elements that make up an advertisement intended for a more western, individualistic audience verses a collectivistic eastern audience. Note the following legend when analyzing the matrices listed below:

(y-axis)
IND = individualistic / COL = collectivistic
MAS = masculine / FEM = feminine
LPD = low power distance / HPD = high power distance
WUA = weak uncertainty avoidance / SUA = strong uncertainty avoidance
STO = short-term orientation / LTO = long-term orientation
SYM = symbolism / x SYM = no symbolism

(x-axis)
DIM = dimension
EC = environmental context
IC = image construction (cultural dimension)
CB = consumer behavior
CLR = color
SYM = symbol
Figure 14: Verizon Wireless Advertisements – Matrices Comparison.
Breakdowns of the culturally-specific information included within each of the five Verizon Wireless advertisements is as follows:

1. Verizon Wireless Advertisement, American (Figure 9):

![Completed Matrix Diagram](image)

*Figure 15: Verizon Wireless American Advertisement – Completed Matrix.*

**a. Cultural Dimension:** The strongest cultural dimension used within this Verizon Wireless advertisement is the representation of an individualistic society. Through the use of a singular, centralized individual, the company places focus on the wants and needs of this specific person. Referencing back to the discussion on the differences existing within Hofstede’s individualistic versus collectivist cultures, an individualistic society places the interests of the individual before the interests of the social group. The tag line also plays into
the individualistic component, where the emphasized “I” further supports the centralized figure in the advertisement. Another cultural dimension strongly represented in this advertisement is masculinity. As discussed in Chapter 2, a masculine culture requires the male gender to be assertive, successful, and focused on materialistic attributes and success. Here we can see strong examples of these definitions; the young man is dressed in casual clothing, sits comfortably in his chair, folds his hands across his middle, and smugly smirking at the camera as if to say, “I am strong, confident, successful, and powerful.” (All-the-while, Verizon is conveying that the individual’s strength, success, and power derives from the use of their Iobi product and service.)

b. **Image Construction Through Cultural Dimension**: As discussed through the work of Bansal and Zahedi, the use of imagery within this advertisement is strongly representative of both individualistic and masculine dimensions. In regards to the individualistic dimension, we see that only one person is represented within the advertisement, and he directly gazes at the audiences. Reinforcing the masculinity dimension is the sole use of the male gender in a successful individualistic role that looks down upon his audience (reinforcing the notion of power), and is shown with a confident smirk (but not a full smile, which is rare in masculine imagery).
c. **Consumer Behavior:** As illustrated through the work of de Mooij, the purchasing behaviors of individualistic and masculine cultures are largely focused around status and wealth. Technological products that can easily enhance the successes of an individual are essential to these cultural dimensions. Furthermore, de Mooij discusses that weak uncertainty avoidance cultures are more trusting of newer technological products/services and are more apt to the purchase these.

d. **Color:** While the use of color does not play a significantly dominant role in creating symbolic meaning within this advertisement, integrating color to the dot of the tagline’s “i” creates a successful link back to the company’s brand and trademark, as well as emphasizes the individualistic dimension that is so strongly represented here. Through this simple addition, the red creates a direct focal point, drawing the audience’s eye directly to “I” tagline, reinforcing the individualistic message.
2. Verizon Communications Advertisement, Korean-American (Figure 10):

![Completed Matrix Diagram](image)

*Figure 16: Verizon Communications Korean–American Advertisement – Completed Matrix.*

**a. Cultural Dimension:** The “group” is a powerful signifier of a collectivistic culture and is strongly represented in this advertisement. Through the use of two educators engaging in an energetic interaction with students eagerly raising their hands in participation, the company successfully references the needs of the group. Additionally important to a collectivistic culture is the idea of group harmony, which Verizon Communications illustrates through the classroom energy, as well as the enthusiasm and smiles shown on the instructors’ faces. As referenced through discussions regarding Richard E. Nisbett’s definitions of collectivism in Chapter 2, the group’s performance and goals are most important, and achievement is a result of being in harmony...
within the group – all of which are shown within this advertisement.
Furthermore, the low power distance dimension is represented through the messaging of social equals; even though there exists teachers and students, there is no specific social hierarchies defined.

b. **Social and Environmental Context:** As can be seen through the research of Nisbett, environmental context is also an important element represented within this advertisement. Similar to Nisbett’s Emotional Recognition example (Figure 4), we can see how the perceived happiness and enthusiasm of the instructors is used to help convey the idea of a harmonious, educational atmosphere – because Asian audiences see “emotions . . . as inseparable from the feelings of the group” (Masuda et al, 2008, p. 365). Again, this is represented through both the collectivistic and low power distance dimensions.

c. **Image Construction Through Cultural Dimension:** As discussed through the work of Bansal and Zahedi, the use of imagery within this advertisement is strongly representative of both the collectivistic and low power distance dimensions. In regards to the collectivistic dimension, we see the “group” represented – everyone is in tune and interactive in an educational setting, and gazes are all directed at each other. Additionally, the absence of social hierarchies within this advertisement (both through gender and class) represents the low power distance dimension. Individuals are shown as
equals, no one specific person has control over another, and poses are casual and energetic.

d. **Consumer Behavior:** As stated by de Mooij, major purchasing behaviors of collectivistic cultures focuses around the group and what helps enhance the unity and harmony of this group. Additionally, in low power distance cultures, products that help people interact and connect with others are valued. Lastly, Koreans are considered a weak uncertainty avoidance culture, which means it is more trusting of newer technological products/services and are more apt to the purchase these.
3. *Verizon Communications Advertisement, Filipino-American (Figure 11)*:

![Completed Matrix](image)

*Figure 17: Verizon Communications Filipino–American Advertisement – Completed Matrix.*

**a. Cultural Dimension:** Family relationships are also powerful signifiers of a collectivistic culture, and are strongly represented in this advertisement. By showing a mother’s close and enjoyable interaction with her children, Verizon Communications successfully reinforces the importance of family within a collectivistic culture. Furthermore, the mother’s caring hand is placed on her son’s arm (also signifying the Filipino’s low power distance dimension), encouraging the mother-child interaction and further emphasizes the importance of these relationships.
b. **Social and Environmental Context:** Through collectivistic and low power distance dimensions, the environmental context shown here is also important in helping emphasize the representation “family.” Placed behind the mother and her children within the image is their (assumed) home, a context essential to the ideals of family within a collectivistic society. Situating the mother and her children on a street in front of their house, assumably in a neighborhood context, and celebrating an event, helps convey ideals of not just a family, but also a group celebration.

c. **Image Construction Through Cultural Dimension:** As discussed through the work of Bansal and Zahedi, the use of imagery within this advertisement is strongly representative of both the collectivistic and low power distance dimensions. In regards to the collectivistic dimension, we see the “family group” represented – mother and children are all interacting with each other, each person looking down at the same interactive object. Additionally, the absence of social hierarchies within this advertisement represents the low power distance dimension. Although clearly represented as a parental figure, the mother shows no sign of distinct controlling power over her children – their smiling faces and the mother’s gentle touch all signify this idea. Using the mother figure in the image also helps signify the Filipino feminine dimension, where the main authority figures in a feminine society are represented as female.
d. **Consumer Behavior:** Again here we see the ideals of a collectivistic, weak uncertainty avoidance, and low power distance dimensions represented. Collectivistic: a product that will promote harmony and unity within the group; weak uncertainty avoidance: trusting in technology products and services; and low power distance: a product that will create interaction and connectivity with others.

4. **Verizon Communications Advertisement, Japanese-American (Figure 12):**

![Completed Matrix](image)

*Figure 18: Verizon Communications Japanese–American Advertisement – Completed Matrix.*

a. **Cultural Dimension:** In this example, we again see the strong importance of family relationships within collectivistic societies. Verizon Communications’
message is clear: through their available technologies, the (assumed) grandmother is still able to see and touch her children and grandchildren, even from a distance. Through both contextual and close-up views of the image, we see the woman tenderly touching her computer screen, further emphasizing the importance of family. The up-close shot helps intensify the sentiment, and the contextual view allows the grandmother into the extended family context.

b. **Social and Environmental Context:** While incorporating a close-up view into the advertisement allows emotion to be represented through sincere touch, including a contextual view of the grandmother within her home allows additional meaning to be conveyed through the environment. Remember that collectivistic societies are field dependent and derive image meaning through context – and here we see the women interacting with this photo on her computer screen in the most intimate and important of places. This room within her home is the place where she is able to use technology to connect with her family even when they cannot be physically present; her home is the essential “family setting”.

c. **Image Construction Through Cultural Dimension:** Once again we see here image definition through the collectivistic cultural dimension. Even though not all members are fully present within the same setting, the “family group” is strongly represented within this advertisement, reinforcing the
collectivistic cultural dimension. Additionally, even though it appears as if the grandmother is simply looking at a photograph on the screen, her and her children/grandchild are all shown gazing at each other, reinforcing the idea of family relationships and easy connectivity available through the use of Verizon Communications’ products and services.

d. **Consumer Behavior:** Here again we see the ideals of a collectivistic, weak uncertainty avoidance, and low power distance dimensions represented. Collectivistic: a product that will promote harmony and unity within the group; weak uncertainty avoidance: trusting in technology products and services; and low power distance: a product that will create interaction and connectivity with others.
5. *Verizon Communications Advertisement, Chinese-American (Figure 13):*

![Completed Matrix of Color Design Elements]

*Figure 19: Verizon Communications Chinese–American Advertisement – Completed Matrix.*

a. **Color:** Color is the first of two important design elements used for this Chinese Verizon Communications advertisement. Red is a strong signifier of good luck, fortune, and fertility in China; and like previously explained in the Pepsi example (Section 2.12, Color and Culture) where the company changed their packaging from its traditional blue to red to honor China in the 2008 Summer Olympics, red is also used to represent celebration. Furthermore, combining the color gold with red is a strong signifier of success and importance. In this Verizon Communications advertisement, Chinese red and gold decorations combine to form an illustrated fish in order to help represent the celebration of the Lunar New Year (for definitions of red and gold...
meaning within Chinese culture, reference Appendix A: Breakdown of Color Meaning by Culture). Additionally, Verizon addresses ideals that, through the use of their products and service, the Chinese will find success and prosperity within the New Year.

b. **Symbology:** Symbolic meaning is the second important design element used within this Chinese advertisement. Not only are the colors red and gold used to help celebrate an affluent and successful Chinese Lunar New Year, but the inclusion of the centralized, dominant fish is also representative of this idea. After all, to the Chinese, fish are strongly symbolic for abundance and prosperity (Lipton, 2002, p. 131).

c. **Consumer Behavior:** Although this message is represented through color and symbology, the collectivistic, weak uncertainty avoidance, and low power distance dimensions are still strongly representative of the Chinese culture. As previously seen, the collectivistic idea believes in a product that will promote harmony and unity within the group; a weak uncertainty avoidance culture is more trusting in technology products and services; and low power distance cultures are more likely to purchase products that will create interaction and connectivity with others.
This detailed mini-case study is a prime example of the designer’s need to be knowledgeable in the area of multicultural visual communication. It shows elements important to visual communication do not always carry universal meanings throughout worldwide audiences. Failure to properly research possible cultural implications of our designs may have the ability to result in unintended insults, bad corporate image, and ultimately a possible loss of profit. However as we have seen through analysis of the Verizon Communications/Wireless advertisements, audiences are incredibly diverse in their traditions, beliefs, values, and interpretations, and as designers, we cannot rely solely on our own cultural background in designing visual communication for other cultures. It is vital that those trusted to relay messaging to audiences other than their own understand that .

. . . consumers respond to advertising messages in a manner that is congruent to their cultural values and norms . . . [and the] understanding of cultural similarities and differences . . . are crucial to the development of successful advertising campaigns in the international markets (Gunaratne & Rahman, 2005, p. 47).

Without this understanding, a business’ communication, products, and/or advertising campaigns could suffer substantially from mixed messaging, resulting in an ultimate decline in corporate success.
3.2 Cultural Design Components Matrix: Breaking Down an Unsuccessful Campaign

What happens when an individual (or individuals) responsible for cross-cultural design does not recognize the importance of understanding backgrounds which define their visual communicative audience? Remember back to the culturally unsensitive McDonalds’ television advertisement (section 2.10) where the company depicted a Chinese consumer kneeling (or in their eyes, begging) to a McDonalds’ employee – how could the use of a Cultural Design Components Matrix have prevented such a disrespectful message from taking place? Figure 20 shows the breakdown of cultural definitions that McDonalds assumed of their Chinese audience:

*Figure 20: Matrix – McDonalds’ Assumed Chinese Cultural Definitions.*
Figure 21 shows the breakdown of Hofstede’s prescribed dimensions and constructions defining the Chinese audience that should have been taken into consideration when creating the McDonalds’ advertisement:

![Matrix – Actual Chinese Cultural Definitions](image)

*Figure 21: Matrix – Actual Chinese Cultural Definitions.*

Finally, Figure 22 shows the comparison of the matrices side–by–side:

![McDonalds’ Chinese Advertisement – Matrices Comparison](image)

*Figure 22: McDonalds’ Chinese Advertisement – Matrices Comparison.*
Analysis of these matrices begin to shed light on where McDonalds went wrong. First, those responsible for the communicative message assumed that, like their Western audiences, the Chinese were individualistic and short-term oriented in cultural dimension, ignoring importances of group harmony and of longevity. Additionally, through representing the customer kneeling to the employee, they (whether knowingly or not) strongly conveyed messages of high power distance. China is very much a collectivistic, low power distance, long-term oriented culture, believing in group unity and harmony, and that social hierarchies do not exist. If McDonalds would have been properly aware of these major differences when creating their advertisement, they may have prevented such a failed (and offensive) message.

### 3.3 Matrices Results as Means for Graphic Design Curriculum Criteria

Analysis conducted of the Verizon Communications/Wireless advertisements and the failed McDonalds television advertisement (through the use of the Cultural Design Components Maxtrix, Appendix C) provide us with useful insights about research practices needed to design cross-cultural visual communication. Cultural dimensions, color, imagery, and symbolism were used diligently in these advertisements and should serve as viable examples of what designers should consider during their design processes. Therefore, it is important that reformed curricular criteria should be shaped around the following:

**a. Cultural Dimensions:** As we have seen through the analysis of the Verizon Communications Figures 9–12, attention to detail regarding cultural dimension is important to visual communication. The dichotomy existing between individualistic and collectivistic imagery is strongly represented through the American and Asain advertisements, where the individualistic
(American) culture focuses around one specific male, and the collectivistic (Asian) advertisements show groups and families. Furthermore, we can see where a misunderstanding of these dimensions can result in potentially offensive messaging (as seen through the McDonalds’ advertisement).

b. Social and Environmental Context: While not as prominent in the American Verizon Wireless advertisement, the idea of social and environmental contexts were importantly represented in the Asian Verizon Communications advertisements (Figures 10–12). This can be seen through the educational and family settings, both strongly emphasizing the importance of contextual meaning within visual communication. Additionally, representing a high power distance context to a low power distance culture (such as China, who believes in harmony conveyed through the lack of social hierarchies) should be avoided as to prevent offensive messaging.

c. Image Construction Through Cultural Dimension: Image construction becomes clear through the analysis of both the American and Asian Verizon advertisements (Figures 9–12). As shown, these advertisements successfully represent the prescribed molds set forth by Bansil and Zahedi. Individualistic and masculine imagery show the successful, proud male; collectivistic imagery places focus on the harmonious group; and low power distance imagery conveys social unity and harmony. Furthermore, we again see the construction of an individualistic, high power distance culture coming through
the McDonalds’ advertisement, greatly misrepresenting the Chinese culture in which they are communicating.

d. **Consumer Behavior:** Ideals representative of consumer behavior purchases within specific cultural dimensions are strongly illustrated in these examples. While individualistic, masculine cultures are more likely to purchase products that enhance the self and one’s success, collectivistic cultures are more concerned with products that will supplement the groups unity and harmony. Low power distance cultures (like collectivistic) are interested in products that promote interaction and connectivity between individuals. Lastly, the purchasing habits of weak uncertainty avoidance cultures are represented, where technological products and services are trusted more than in strong uncertainty avoidance cultures.

e. **Color:** Culturally derived meaning with regard to specific color representation is also imperative for successful visual communication. Verizon Wireless signifies celebration, prosperity, and success of the Chinese Lunar New Year through the use of red and gold combinations within their advertisement (Figure 13).

f. **Symbology:** Finally, proper symbolic use can greatly enhance the meaning of any form of visual communication. Verizon Communications successfully achieves this in their Chinese Lunar New Year advertisement (Figure 13) by
combining red and gold decorative patterns to form a fish symbol. As previously mentioned, in China, a fish is symbolic for abundance and prosperity.

3.4 Posing Proper Audience Questions

As educators, it is our responsibility to: a) ensure the continued success of our graphic designers, and b) prepare them to meet and continue to meet the changing needs and demands of graphic design practice. In order to do this, we must guarantee students leave the academy equipped with the required cultural knowledge and skills to communicate a given message to any intended audience. The immediacy of this issue calls for curricular reform within higher education graphic design programs. Currently, most schools place the importance of cultural education far behind the teaching of aesthetic formation and practice (Davis, 2005, p. 17). Therefore, integrating these studies into the graphic design curriculum is a solution which could, and should, bring needed cultural knowledge and education into the classroom.

The first step to reforming the graphic design curriculum is ensuring students pose the proper questions about these receiving audiences and final goals before starting any visually communicative design. As stated by Meredith Davis (2005), professor of graphic design at North Carolina State University, “Students rarely ask whether the problem is worth solving, move beyond simple demographics in defining audience, or explore how the product fits into the larger context of the client’s organization – let alone the audience’s culture and everyday lives” (p. 16). Recognizing the dire need to address this issue, North Carolina State University’s graphic design program is one of the first, and only, universities who have
begun integrating theories, definitions, and instruction of social societies into their curriculum. Although in-depth study of culture exists solely within their master’s program at this time, this topic remains a focus for integration in undergraduate curricular programs.

North Carolina State University’s cultural studies in graphic design is centralized around a holistic process that enriches the students’ education in order to prepare them for work in various cultural societies. Through their studies, students are required to first research the “cognitive science, linguistics . . . learning theory . . . and practical communications solutions that address differences in audiences’ cognitive styles” (Davis, 2005, p. 17). From there, students begin to dissect cultural frameworks as they relate to communication. Lastly, the student integrates their studies into visually communicative pieces, testing and assessing outcomes of their interactions.

While integration of these intricate cultural studies might seem better placed in a more advanced (for example: masters) program to some, most graphic design students terminate their education at the Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Fine Arts level, which leaves this necessary information unlearned. Furthermore, waiting to implement any form of cultural studies until after a student has begun studying the theories and practices important to graphic design could slow the learning process. While it is never too late to develop new ideals of the practice, formally integrating cultural studies into an early foundations program will allow the student a basis of knowledge they can continue to build upon as they explore and become proficient in other areas and disciplines of graphic design. Having this underlaying basis of cultural knowledge will allow students to understand how different beliefs, traditions, and practices of social societies fit within the realms of design, and how, as a practicing designer, they can visually communicate proper messages to audiences other
than their own. Reforming graphic design curriculum could prove an in-depth process, but it is one that can only benefit and reward our students, both in terms of their futures, and the future of our field.

While higher education programs may believe they offer the tools graphic design students need to compete in this new globalized economy, most fall short of recognizing the importance of integrating cultural studies into the curriculum. Where aesthetics and the principles of design are important to a graphic design program, so too becomes an understanding of cultural differences and their affect on proper communication across cultural lines. Steven Heller argues that applicants to Master of Fine Arts programs across the nation show ever-growing signs that graduating Bachelor of Fine Arts students are not entirely prepared for work in an industry now concentrated on “integrated practice and advanced technology.” He continues, “Undergraduate education should be a full plate of pedagogical necessities that prepare students to enter the design field” (Heller, pp. 128–129). A new part of these “pedagogical necessities” has become teaching culture and cultural definitions. Thomas Friedman reinforces this idea by stating, “Everyone is going to have to improve themselves and be able to compete” (p. 222). Outsourcing, technology, and open lines of communication may be a potential threat to the field of graphic design, but instead of looking at the situation as something negative, we need to address it as an opportunity to reinvent ourselves and to help shape future designers into the cultural communicators of tomorrow.
3.5 Curriculum Integration Overview

In order to build a strong foundation of cultural education in graphic design, integration should exist as a two-part process, one that is similar in nature to what is found at North Carolina State University. Theoretically, a student would first be introduced to standard cultural studies in their freshman year while still in their art/design foundation courses. Before any formal culturally-based design training begins, the student must first participate in an intensive reading and writing seminar focused on communication theories, as well as intricate cultural understandings and how these relate to visual communication. Once students have completed their foundation courses and have become active participants in the graphic design program, they would then be required to put their new-found knowledge into practice through a class centralized around designing various forms of media for diverse worldwide audiences. The underlying goal of this new curriculum is to give the student a formal basis on which they can continue to build as they complete and master other areas of graphic design, both in school, and as a future practitioner.

3.6 Seminar: Visual Communication and Culture

In order to introduce cultural studies to graphic design students, this new curricular plan will begin with a required intensive reading and writing seminar that will help teach communication theories, cultural dimensions, definitions, and understandings existing among worldwide cultures and societies. This seminar will be completely void of student design work in order to allow them to focus exclusively on learning the cultural information needed for successful practice in visual communication. This course will complement other required
liberal arts and general education courses (such as foreign language), and create an even more balanced approach to education.

Over the duration of a semester, this seminar, *Visual Communication and Culture*, will be broken down into ten detailed sections, requiring the reading and discussion of assigned material (syllabus, Appendix D). At the end of each week, students will be asked to submit a written journal expressing their interests, thoughts, and reactions regarding the material presented and learned. At the end of the semester, students will submit a ten page paper exploring in more finite detail a subject previously learned during the semester (for example, comparing and contrasting elements such as color, image use, and symbols within varied cultural contexts; differences in the consumer behavior with regard to a specific product or products; or comparisons and contrasts of certain cultural advertising campaigns). This will be a paper of the student’s choice, but is structured so as to produce a holistic understanding of the information learned in class. The use of imagery in the paper is encouraged in order to help the student build associations about how visual communication operates within societies. This project not only helps students further explore an area of interest, but also allows the graphic design department to ensure pre-assigned learning outcomes for the class are being met (chart, Appendix E). The use of the Cultural Design Components Matrix (Appendix C) will be introduced during this seminar in order to teach students how to properly extract cultural elements within pre-existing visually communicative pieces.
The reading material, content, and learning outcomes of this course are centralized around the following subject areas:

1. **Communication Theory:**
   a) **Reading Material:** “See What I Mean: An Introduction to Visual Communication” (Morgan & Welton).
   b) **Class Content:** Students explore and learn about theories of visual communication and modes of messaging relay between sender and receiver (Content explained in section 2.1).
   c) **Student Learning Objectives:** Students will understand modes and important components of visual communication and use these tools as building blocks for the cultural content learned during the semester.

2. **Geert Hofstede and Cultural Dimensions:**
   a) **Reading Material:** “Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind” (Hofstede).
   b) **Class Content:** Students explore and learn about the five major cultural dimensions defined by Hofstede, including power distance, individual versus collectivistic, feminine versus masculine, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term versus short-term orientation (content explained in section 2.2).
   c) **Student Learning Objectives:** Students will be able to define individual components of each dimension; compare, contrast, and make relative links between dimensions; and explain how these dimensions relate to the
attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of existing global societies.

3. **Image and Social (Environmental) Context:**

   a) **Reading Material:** “The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently and Why” (Nisbett). “Cultural Psychology” (Heine); “Culture and Aesthetic Preference: Comparing the attention to Context of East Asians and Americans” (Masuda, Gonzalez, Kwan, & Nisbett).

   b) **Class Content:** Students explore and learn about variances in social definitions, meanings, and understandings with regard to environmental factors – ie. foreground and background context (content explained in section 2.5).

   c) **Student Learning Objectives:** Students will be able to discuss how various cultures perceive and understand an image as it relates to supporting contextual elements.

4. **Image Construction Through Cultural Dimension:**

   a) **Reading Material:** “Exploring Cultural Contents of Website Images” (Bansal & Zahedi). “Cultural Psychology” (Heine); “Culture and Aesthetic Preference: Comparing the attention to Context of East Asians and Americans” (Masuda, Gonzalez, Kwan, & Nisbett), “Consumer Behavior and Culture” (De Mooij).
b) **Class Content:** Students explore and learn how images are constructed in varying cultures, as well as what specific elements or groupings are used to convey an intended message (content explained in sections 2.6–2.7).

c) **Student Learning Objectives:** Students will be able to recognize the proper usage of imagery (both human form and correct environmental setting) to convey specific meanings to intended audiences.

5. **Culture and Consumer Behavior:**

   a) **Reading Material:** “Consumer Behavior and Culture” (De Mooij).

   b) **Class Content:** Students explore and learn culturally based consumer habits as they exist within a prescribed dimension (content explained in section 2.8).

   c) **Student Learning Objectives:** Students will be able to discuss how various cultures act as consumers, and ways advertising can meet these needs.

6. **Color and Culture:**

   a) **Reading Material:** “Global Graphics: Color” (Peterson & Cullen)

   b) **Class Content:** Students explore and learn differences in color symbolism and interpretation among diverse global cultures and societies (content explained in section 2.11).

   c) **Student Learning Objectives:** Students will be able to compare and contrast meanings of color between cultures.
7. **Semiotics, Symbology, and Culture:**

   **a) Reading Material:** “Creating Effective Advertising Using Semiotics” (Nadin & Zakia). “Global Graphics: Symbols” (Miller and Brown; Dangel-Cullen).

   **b) Class Content:** Students explore and learn underlying meanings of semiotics and how they are relevant to cultural visual communication, especially in regards to symbolic meaning (content explained in section 2.12).

   **c) Student Learning Objectives:** Students will be able to compare and contrast differences in icon, index, and symbols and further define various symbols and their meanings within diverse cultures.

8. **Mixing Messages and Designing Across Cultures:**

   **a) Reading Material:** “Mixing Messages: Graphic Design in Contemporary Culture” (Lupton); “Designing Across Cultures” (Lipton).

   **b) Class Content:** Students explore various cultural and ethnic groups in their own surrounding, and relate their observations to the content previously learned (content explained in section 2.13). Students also begin to explore examples of visual communication created for different cultural audiences.

   **c) Student Learning Objectives:** Students will gain a better understanding of African American/Hispanic-American cultures existing within the United States, and will start putting together content learned with physical
9. Cultural Campaign Examples:

a) Reading Material: “McDonald’s Ad Banned Due to Insulting Plot” (China Daily); “Consumers’ Response to Offensive Advertising: A Cross Cultural Study” (Chan, Li, Diehl, and Ralf); “Pepsi Steps into Coke Realm: Red, China” (Chao & McKay); “Global Graphics: Color” (Peterson & Dangel Cullen); “Global Graphics: Symbols” (Miller and Brown; Dangel Cullen).

b) Class Content: Students review previously existing advertising campaigns (both successful and unsuccessful) and discuss in class what aspects of the visual message were done correctly or incorrectly (content explained in sections 2-10 – 2-12).

c) Student Learning Objectives: Students will be able to put the course contents together holistically and understand the important role cultural understanding plays in producing visual communications for culturally diverse audiences.

10. Analyzing Cultural Advertising

a) Advertising Material: Part 1: Students are presented with the five Verizon Wireless advertisements. Part 2: Students are required to research and find cultural advertisements of their own.

b) Class Content: Students are given the Cultural Design Components Maxtrix (Appendix C), along with the Verizon Wireless advertisements
(Part 1) and required to break down the cultural design elements in each. Students are then required to research and supply their own advertisements (Part 2) to apply to the matrix.

c) **Student Learning Objectives:** Students will be able to take the cultural components learned throughout the semester and extract these from pre-existing advertising examples.

Consolidating all of the major cultural dimensions, social aspects, and definitions into one proposed intensive reading and writing seminar will help students develop a knowledge base in issues of cultural understanding on which they can continue to build as they move forward in their graphic design education.

### 3.7 Studio: Applications of Cultural Design

After completing the semester-long *Visual Communication and Culture* seminar and becoming active participants in the graphic design program, the second step in the cultural curriculum integration takes place within a studio class that incorporates the student’s multicultural knowledge base into the practice of design. The idea of this course is to bring various components of the design field together (branding, poster, packaging, advertising, etc.) with culturally specific tasks. Theoretically, this course material will make the students’ design work relevant to any future diverse client and/or audience.

Before design work begins, the Cultural Design Components Matrix (Appendix C) presented in the freshman seminar will be reintroduced. To help instill the consistent practice of this matrix when designing for cross-cultural audiences, students will be required
to analyze their work after the completion of each project and turn in their detailed matrix with their process notebooks.

The basis of this Applications of Cultural Design course (syllabus, Appendix F) will consist of four separate projects, where students practice designing various media formats for different audiences. The first project will be fully assigned by the instructor, and the last three will give students some choice as to what type of design they complete, and for which audience. By the end of the semester, students should have a wide range of experiences blending the knowledge learned in the seminar and the studio, including certain additional research conducted on a project-by-project basis.

1. Project One – Assigned Medium and Demographic:

Because research is at such a deficit in the continued practice of graphic design (as well as in designing for various cultures), it is important that students begin their first project by learning to thoroughly investigate their audience. Given a more structured project with a pre-determined design format and demographic will:

a. Help reinforce the information learned in the Visual Communication and Cultures seminar,

b. Familiarize students with research methods, helping to make them more confident in their researching abilities, and

c. Theoretically engage students, making them more passionate about their assigned social cultures.
Many American universities use this type of approach within the classroom by integrating projects where students are assigned a specific artist or historical style and are then required to produce work mimicking the researched style. What makes this method of learning so successful is the fact that “... during the course of this research, students immerse themselves in the particular methodology and mannerisms that may truly lead to further curiosity and investigation. And this is a good thing” (Heller, 2005, p. 94). This is a great method, especially when asking students to research a specific culture for which they are required to create and design visual communication. Not only does it instill a new-found interest within the student, but it also allows them to develop the foundations necessary for successful visual research practices.

In summary, through an assigned cultural demographic and design media format, students will be required to thoroughly research their intended audience and produce a workable piece that properly communicates a desired message. By the end of the project, students should be able to successfully and confidently present their research material and design during a final critique (project statement, Appendix G). Again, students will be required to cross-check their visual messaging within the Cultural Design Components Matrix (Appendix C) to ensure the proper use of design elements within their design.

2. Projects Two through Four:

After the students have completed their first instructor assigned, research-intensive project, they will spend the rest of the semester building upon learned information and research methods by designing three separate projects geared for different social and cultural
groups. For these projects, the student will be allowed to choose both the audience and media format for the design from a provided list of five projects and a second list of five demographics. To ensure a broad range of culturally relevant design experiences, the individual students are not allowed to repeat these choices throughout their three assignments. In other words, if Student A chooses to design Medium C for Demographic E for project two, Student A cannot use Medium C or Demographic E again for either of projects three and four (project statement, Appendix H).

As mentioned earlier, the instructor will provide the student with five cultural regions to choose from:

- Asia (choice of one: Japan, Korea, China, Thailand),
- India,
- Mexico,
- Europe (choice of one: England, France, Germany, Italy), and
- American sub-culture (choice of one: African American or Hispanic-American).

The instructor will also present the student with five areas of design to use in completing their three projects:

- Corporate Identity (set of five individual brandings)
- Poster (set of three),
- Magazine advertisements (set of three),
- Consumer website (five pages deep), and
- Packaging set (three items from defined types).
Students will then create combinations from their lists by combining one culture with one design format. They will do this three times, resulting in three separate combinations, presenting all three at a final critique. Allowing all students a choice will result in multiple solutions to various design problems within the class, and presenting these design solutions to classmates will ultimately broaden the scope of learning and educational outcomes (Appendix I).
CHAPTER 4. CONCLUSION

A new technological and globalized era has fallen upon us, changing the way both graphic designers and practitioners look at and work within the field. New opportunities to engage worldwide clientele and to design for diverse audiences indicate that institutions of higher education must make revisions in their graphic design programs. Preparing future graphic designers with the skills needed to properly communicate to specifically assigned audiences (such as defined through the Verizon Communications/Wireless analysis) is vital. These needed skills include:

- Communication theories,
- Distinct beliefs, traditions, and characteristics identified in the five cultural dimensions defined by Geert Hofstede,
- Culturally specific patterns in derivation of meanings from image, especially those related to foreground versus background and environmental context,
- Association and meaning through individual physicalities and appearances within imagery,
- Consumer purchasing behaviors relative to societal and cultural dimensions,
- Differences in color meaning across cultures, and
- Differences in semiotics, with detailed focus placed on symbolic meaning across cultures.

Furthermore, building a Cultural Design Components Matrix (Appendix C) to both aid in the development of a culturally focused graphic design courses, as well as for use by
students at the end of their projects to cross-check their designs for messaging accuracy, is needed for the success of this curricular integration.

The design of visual communication for worldwide audiences centers around the idea that culture largely influences the way a message is read and understood. It is not enough to assume that meanings existing within our own society hold true for everyone around the world – rather it is essential to realize that color, imagery, symbology, environmental context, and consumer behavior all represent different things to different people. Combining these ideals with references of successful versus unsuccessful design and marketing campaigns will further emphasize the importance of cultural understanding and, in theory, lead to new and more effective graphic design practices.

As design educators, we must take a gigantic leap forward in the integration of cultural studies with the current curriculum content in graphic design. A reading and writing seminar opening student minds to the definitions and interpretation of cultural societies, supplemented by an intense, hands-on design studio experience would theoretically be an effective way to achieve these goals. These classes will not only help broaden the minds of tomorrow’s designers, but allow students to build upon foundations of cultural understanding as they advance through their education and into practice within the industry.

**Future Research**

In order to fully understand the knowledge students would a) bring with them into the beginner Visual Communication and Culture seminar course, and b) ultimately take away from this seminar, a pre and post-course participant survey should to be developed and
implemented to test overall successes. Through information gained from the survey, curriculum reform and revision can move forward and develop better ways to prepare our graphic design students for design practice in a global society.
APPENDIX A. BREAKDOWN OF COLOR MEANING BY CULTURE

1. Red:

- In America, the color red primarily represents meanings of warning, danger, and death, sex and passion, and safety and rescue. When applied to food, it usually signifies spicy.

- In major Asian cultures, such as China and South Korea, red is a strong signifier of good luck (such as fortune and fertility). It also signifies celebration.

- Japan uses red to show strength and durability. However, watch writing names or letters with red ink when visually communicating to Asian cultures: in China and Japan, the use of red ink can signify the end of a relationship. If a person’s name is written in red, it signifies his or her death.

- If red ink is used to write a letter in Indonesia, it means the writer is angry with the person to whom the letter is intended (Peterson & Cullen, 2000, pp. 9–168).

- Using red alone in Korean visual communication design should be taken with caution, for it could be read as Communist (Lipton, 2002, p. 124–125).

- Like their Asian counterparts, people in India also see red as a signifier of fertility. Other connotations of red include health, beauty, and spiciness.

- As in America, Israel’s representation of red takes on both positive and negative connotations. On the one hand, red represents love, strength, and sacrifice. On the other, it represents hate, anger, and blood.
- Power and authority is red’s main association in countries such as England, Scotland, and Ireland (Peterson & Cullen, 2000, pp. 66–176).

2. **Yellow:**

- To Americans, yellow is a strong signifier of the sun. However, it is primarily used to represent such meanings as caution, cheap, and cowardice.
- Asian cultures use yellow to signify the earth, power, and royalty. The earhtone color of China’s soil helps give yellow its significance.
- Yellow is commonly used for outdoors and gardening in Japan, which identifies closely with flowers and sunshine. It is also used to signify happiness and joy.
- West African cultures use yellow to symbolize high ranking authority.
- India also relates yellow with the sun and its power and energy.
- France, like Japan, uses yellow to represent the sun, summer, flowers, and joy. On the other hand, in certain situations, yellow is also used to represent betrayal (Peterson & Cullen, 2000, pp. 9–176).

3. **Blue:**

- Blue, in America, is a strong, substantial color that represents strength, sturdiness, reliability, and trustworthiness. Dark blue represents “officialdom” (authority), such as positions or objects indicative of the United States government.
• In Asian cultures, such as the Chinese, blue carries only positive associations, and is often representative of water and sky.
• For India, blue signifies truth and love.
• In Korea, blue represents mourning.
• In Egypt, blue symbolizes truth and justice.
• In Israel, blue “is the color of the Lord.”
• Countries such as Turkey and Africa believe the color blue carries positive medicinal qualities, such as fertility and healing.
• In France, blue has a more calming effect, and is also used to represent chic and expensive tastes (Peterson & Cullen, 2000, pp. 10–176).

4. Green:
• Where Americans view green as both materialistic and natural, it is more popularly understood to represent inexperience, greed, and envy.
• In Asia, specifically China, green is one of the highest-ranking colors representing high-spiritedness and enthusiasm, birth and youth, as well as all things natural such as spring, earth, plants, and crops (Peterson & Cullen, 2000, pp. 10–149). Furthermore, the color of green (specifically jade) is considered to signify “health, longevity, prosperity and harmony” (Lipton, 2002, p. 124–125).
• Countries such as Greece, India, and Western Europe (England, Scotland, and Ireland) also understand the color to represents earth, plants, and crops.
• Egypt believes green to be a positively medicinal color, aiding in health and fertility (Peterson & Cullen, 2000, pp. 67–176).

5. Orange:

• Orange is a color that continues to gain popularity in America. Where it often relates to slowness and delay (such as can be found with construction signs), it has recently become popular for conveying freshness and an upbeat attitude. It also represents fruitiness or citrusy, sunsets, and the fall season.

• In Asian cultures, orange is a strong representation of happiness, love, and good health.

• Orange carries a religious connotation in Ireland, symbolizing the Protestant faith.

• Western Europe considers orange as a less positive color, focusing more on its use for warning signs. It also carries cheaper, more distasteful connotations (Peterson & Cullen, 2000, pp. 10–149).

6. Purple and Pink:

• A common theme among many cultures (American, Japanese, Italian, and Western European such as England, Scotland, and Ireland) is that purple strongly represents royalty, imperialism, and high-ranking officials.

• In Israel, purple stands for nature and divinity.

• Purple is the color of mourning in Brazil.
• In many countries such as America, Western Europe, and India, pink often represents femininity and youth. It also tends to convey softness, delicacy, and soothing.
• Pink is the common color of undergarments in Japan, and is said to help with proper circulation and good health.
• In Japan, the pink Peony flower actually represents masculinity (Peterson & Cullen, 2000, pp. 10–177).

7. Brown:
• If used in the right context and in the right hue, brown is a color which conveys a strong earthly correlation for Americans. However, it can also have negative meanings representing rust, dirtiness, and poverty.
• Brown represents luxury in Italy (due to the rich color of Italian leathers).
• Brown represents appetite and richness in Switzerland (because of fine Swiss chocolate).
• Brown also represents honesty in Western Europe (Peterson & Cullen, 2000, pp. 11–115).

8. Gold:
• Gold is a high luxury color for Americans, relaying a sense of quality and status.
• Gold is highly regarded in Asian cultures. In Japan, for example, it represents modesty, wealth, and status.
• Korea also uses gold to signify importance and wealth.

• It is not uncommon in China to see the color gold combined with red on clothing and other items (such as gold lettering on a red background) to represent success and importance.

• In Africa, gold represents continuous life, and the queen dresses from head to toe in gold garb.

• Gold covers churches and priests in Italy and France, where it represents divinity, holiness, and power (Peterson & Cullen, 2000, pp. 11–169).

9. **Black:**

• Black has strong dual connotations for Americans – on the one hand, it means somberness, death, evil, and morbidity. On the other, it stands for sophistication, formalness, and sexiness.

• Asian cultures also carry dual connotations – on the one hand, black represents water, life, and stability, but is also associated with the unknown, danger, and mourning.

• In Egypt, if an object is black (such as a black cat), it is regarded as lucky. However, black also represents evil and darkness.

• In Africa, black carries no negative connotation, just ones of age, maturity, and spirituality.

• India has little positive meaning with black, which represents laziness, anger, and apathy (Peterson & Cullen, 2000, pp. 11–177).
10. **White:**

- In America, white represents cleanliness, freshness, and elegance. However when used in certain situations, it can represent coldness, emptiness, and a sense of boredom (Peterson & Cullen, 2000, p. 12).
- In Asian cultures, white is quite symbolic and signifies death and mourning. In fact, white carries a strong correlation to funerals, and Asians wear this color when attending a service (Lipton, 2002, p. 122). Importantly, if using ample amounts of white space within a design, the idea of death and possible representation of a funeral is conveyed to the Asian viewer. On the other hand, white also stands for purity and honesty.
- In India, white only carries positive associations such as knowledge, light, and serenity.
- In Israel, white means wisdom and peace.
- In Western Europe, white generally represents purity and cleanliness. But like America, it can also mean emptiness and dullness (Peterson and Cullen, 2000, pp. 63–149).

11. **Gray and Silver:**

- Gray oftentimes signifies dullness for Americans and rarely carries a positive meaning. Silver, on the other hand, represents expensiveness, quality, sleekness, and classiness. Importantly, in the United States, silver is primarily a masculine color.
• Silver is also very masculine in Asian cultures, such as Japan, where it represents strength and accuracy.

• In Spain and Portugal, gray represents strength and stability.

• In Western European countries such as England, Scotland, and Ireland, gray tends to show safeness in nature, as well as represent class, tradition, and elegance (Peterson & Cullen, 2000, pp. 12–169).
APPENDIX B. BREAKDOWN SYMBOLIC MEANINGS BY CULTURE

1. Animals

Birds:

- One of the strongest, most important symbols in American iconography is the eagle. Not only is it the national symbol, but it also represents pride, power, and authority.
- In Argentina, the Andean Condor is used to represent longevity and old age.
- In Egypt, a hawk has more negative overtones and represents death. Furthermore, a hawk is used to show a preference for war over peace within Christian symbolism.
- In Greece and the United States, the dove is symbolic of peace.
- Swans, in Germany, represent beauty, femininity, and grace. For other Europeans, they symbolize purity and nobility.
- In Europe, geese commonly represent the women and household.
- In Germany, the goose is considered a sacrificial animal. In Rome, it is considered a delicacy.
- In China, the goose represents a heavenly creature, signifying “creativity, love, constancy, truth, and inspiration.”
- To many westerners, the owl symbolizes intellect and wisdom. However, in China, the owl is thought to bring misfortune and bad luck.
- In Africa, an owl’s hooting is believed to be a sign of imminent death.
• In France, the rooster is thought to repel death. Interestingly, the French believe the crowing of a rooster scares off demons of the night upon sunrise.

Insects:

• While symbolic of beauty, the butterfly carries other cultural meanings. In France, it is represents a messenger.
• To the Japanese, the butterfly is a feminine figure, representing youthfulness. However, show one lone butterfly resting on a flower and the meaning now represents a man in love. Additionally, two butterflies dancing around each other is strongly symbolic for the union of marriage (Miller, Brown, & Cullen, 2000, pp. 9–168).

Reptiles:

• In Brazil, the Anaconda is strongly representative of the earth.
• The anaconda also symbolizes earth and rain in Africa.
• In China, the anaconda is a symbol for wealth.
• In India, the anaconda is known as the “guardian of the earth’s treasures.”
• The crocodile is representative of hypocrisy and “the jaws of Hell” in Europe.
• Egyptians relate the crocodile to ancient gods of chaos and misrule.
• Romans, however, believed the hide of a crocodile brings good luck against damage accrued by mother nature.
• Mexicans believe crocodiles bring fortune and power (Miller, Brown, & Cullen, 2000, pp. 58–136).
**Mammals:**

- The lion is a popular symbol which represents strength in the United States.
- In countries such as England, Scotland, and Ireland, the lion symbolizes strength, royalty, and power.
- The combination of a lion and fish in Italy represents fire and water.
- In China, the lion is a guardian, father-like figure which provides knowledge and guidance.
- A simple, gentler cat to the Japanese, the lion represents fortune and prosperity.
- In Africa, a cat symbolizes elegance.
- In the United Kingdom, the horse strongly represents dignity and nobility.
- In France and Spain, the horse symbolizes power and life.
- The Greeks and Romans believe the horse symbolizes the sun (notably referring back to mythology where the sun gods are depicted as riding horse-drawn chariots).
- In America, the horse strongly represents freedom.
- In Spain and Portugal, a bull symbolizes masculinity, strength, and power.
- While the wolf is symbolically fierce, wild, and preditorial in countries such as the United States and Europe, it takes on a more gentile, nurturing representation for countries such as China, Siberia, and India. Furthermore, in Roman mythology, brothers Romulus and Remus were said to have been raised by a wolf, helping support the wolf’s symbolic meaning of gentleness.
• To westerners, the pig oftentimes represents dirt and filth – however for countries such as Scandinavia and Germany, it carries the utmost of positive meanings. Representing good fortune, the pig more specifically signifies fertility, prosperity, and wisdom.

• In China, the pig represents masculinity.

• In Europe, the boar specifically symbolizes masculinity (Miller, Brown, & Cullen, 2000, pp. 21–167).

2. Nature

Sun:

• Across most of the world, the use of a (masculine) sun symbolizes life, power, and aggression. Specifically in America, the sun is also used to signify enlightenment and leadership.

• The sun is religiously symbolic in Mexico, where it is praised as their primary god.

• The Japanese (the Land of the Rising Sun) believe that all descendents of their culture came to be through their sun goddess, Amaterasu Omikami.

• Early Christian belief associates the sun with Christ, immortality, and the rebirth of Christ.
Moon:

- The moon, on the other hand, is more feminine, symbolizing passivity and nurturing. In Africa, the moon further symbolizes wisdom.
- In Jewish culture, meanings of the moon revolve around the afterlife and fertility.
- Specifically, a crescent moon represents prosperity and growth to many Europeans.

Stars:

- The Jewish faith regards their five-pointed star as a symbol for heavenly events.
- The Chinese believe in a strong relationship between stars and spirits of the deceased (Miller, Brown, & Cullen, 2000, pp. 13–169).
- Not all cultures regard stars as symbolically positive. Where shooting stars may be a symbol for good luck in a Western culture, they are strongly symbolic for bad luck in Asian cultures (Lipton, 2002, p. 119).

Trees, Flowers, and Harvest:

- Trees are symbolic around the world for strength because of their durability and long lives. As stated by de Mooij (2004), “People in eastern cultures often use tree as a metaphor for a person, which emphasizes the endless shaping of internal dispositions by the external environment” (p. 97).
• In Mexico, the oak tree represents endurance and longevity.

• To Europeans, the “mighty oak” not only represents endurance, but also immortality.

• In many western cultures, palm trees are used to symbolize rest and relaxation.

• Egypt, however, understands palm trees as the peace found in life after death.

• In Greece, the olive tree is sacred – its branches symbolize peace, and the Greeks use the leaves to make wreaths for the victorious in battle or competition.

• The Fleur de Lis is the national symbol for the French, representing purity and death.

• The lotus blossom is a valuable flower to the Chinese, symbolizing purity and knowledge.

• In America, crop production is a livelihood, specifically wheat. Because of their great dependence on this crop, wheat is referred to as the “staff of life” and is commonly used to represent abundance and harvest.

• Rice, in China, has many meanings consistent with that of wheat in America. Certain precautions, however, are necessary when representing rice in visual communication: rice should only be shown filled to the rim of a bowl when it is being offered as a sacrifice to an ancestor. Furthermore, chopsticks represented in a bowl of rice may add additional meaning: chopsticks sticking perfectly upward, for example, represent death or the recently deceased.
Landscape:

• Mountains are commonly universal in meaning, often symbolizing achievement and success. Americans also use them to symbolize beauty and strength.

• In Greece, mountains symbolize the home of the Gods (Miller, Brown, & Cullen, 2000, pp. 39–153).

3. Bodily Gestures

Hands:

• In America, the hand generally represents support and healing through caring touch.

• In Africa, the hand is used to show the delicate nature of growing and harvesting crops.

• The Chinese have various meanings for different hand gestures. To show protection, the palm of the hand should be turned outward with all fingers pointed upward. To represent charity, also turn the palm of the hand outward, making sure the fingers point down. However refrain from using the American “OK” hand symbol (thumb and pointer finger together in a circle with the other three fingers pointed up) – to the Chinese, this shows argument.
Thumbs Up and Winking:

- To Americans, the gesture of giving a “thumbs up” or a “wink” symbolizes acknowledgement, approval, or a sign of a job well done. However in Japan, this is a sign of rudeness (Miller, Brown, & Cullen, 2000, pp. 50–149).

4. Objects & Mythological Creatures

Lightbulb and Flame:

- In America, the light bulb (because of its luminous, bright nature) strongly symbolizes thought and ideation.
- For other countries such as Germany, the symbol of a flame represents spirit and passion.
- In Spain and Portugal, the flame is associated with power.

Skull and Crossbones:

- North Americans instantly recognize the skull and crossbone symbol to mean harm and negativity (such as poison or danger).
- In England, however, the skull and crossbone symbolize mortality.
- In Tibet and Nepal, the skull and crossbone represents good fortune.

Rings and Knots:

- In Europe, showing three rings symbolizes honor, fidelity, and preserverance.
- In Africa, three rings are earthly, representing the changing seasons, the changes of day and night, and the harmonious balances found in nature.
• Knots are more widely used to signify unions and relationships. Christian monks wear a knotted cord around their neck to represent their three vows: celibacy, poverty, and obedience.

• In Egypt, a knot forming a circle symbolizes eternity, and in Africa, the same enclosed knot stands for the connection between earth and all who live there.

• In Buddhist religion, an endless knot represents happiness.

Dragons and the Phoenix:

• Where dragons represent an evil monster needing to be slain by warriors or nobility in western cultures, the dragon is an important symbolic element in Chinese culture, symbolizing fortune, happiness, and fertility.

• A dragon’s color also carries various meanings in China: a turquoise dragon symbolizes nobility, white symbolizes death, and yellow dragons are symbolic of power.

• The Phoenix is strongly symbolic of existence. To the Egyptians, it symbolizes the sun, and for the Romans, it is a powerful sign of immortality and the renewal of life.

• To the Chinese, the Phoenix is the second of four symbols which control the destiny of nations (the dragon, as described above, is another).

• Russians relate the Phoenix with romance and goodness.

• In Jewish religion, the Phoenix strongly relates to human survival (Miller, Brown, & Cullen, 2000, pp. 10–151).
APPENDIX C. CULTURAL DESIGN COMPONENTS MATRIX

Legend:

(y-axis)
IND = individualistic / COL = collectivistic
MAS = masculine / FEM = feminine
LPD = low power distance / HPD = high power distance
WUA = weak uncertainty avoidance / SUA = strong uncertainty avoidance
STO = short-term orientation / LTO = long-term orientation
SYM = symbolism / x SYM = no symbolism

(x-axis)
DIM = dimension
EC = environmental context
IC = image construction (cultural dimension)
CB = consumer behavior
CLR = color
SYM = symbol
APPENDIX D. SYLLABUS – VISUAL COMMUNICATION AND CULTURE

Course Objective
The course objective of this seminar is to explore visual communication as it relates to the various differences and dimensions of cultural beliefs, behaviors, attitudes, and traditions. To assist in the student’s formulation of more defined cultural understandings, this class will be based around readings, in-class discussions, weekly journal writings, and a final written paper.

Many relevant topics will be covered in this class, including:
• Cultural dimensions as defined by professor and social psychologist Geert Hofstede;
• The dichotomies of social thought and cognition as described by professor and cultural psychologist Richard E. Nisbett; and
• Differences in cultural meaning in areas such as color, image, and symbolism.

Textbooks
There are three required texts for this class:
1. See What I Mean: An Introduction to Visual Communication, by John Morgan and Peter Weltz
2. Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind, by Geert Hofstede

You will also be provided with separate reading materials from the following texts and publications:
1. Consumer Behavior and Culture, by Marieke de Mooij
2. Creating Effective Advertising Using Semiotics, by Mahai Nadin and Richard D. Zakia
5. Cultural Psychology, by Steven J. Heine
7. Missing Messages: Graphic Design in Contemporary Culture, by Ellen Lupton
8. Designing Across Cultures, by Ronnie Lipton
9. McDonalds Ad Banned Due to Insulting Plot, China Daily
11. Pepsi Steps into Coke Realm: Red, China, by Loretta Chao and Besty McKay

Assignments
To help reinforce the information you have learned through readings and class discussions, you will be required to write weekly journal entries and complete a final research paper.

Journal Entries: A total of 14 one-page journal entries will be due during the course of the semester. These entries must be submitted by email no later than Friday at 5:00 pm (excluding the Friday before finals week, where there will not be one due). Entries should be thoughtful, well written, and effectively reflect on the week’s readings and in-class discussions. All journal entries should be formatted in Times New Roman font at 12 point size, double spaced, with 1” margins on each side.

Final Research Paper: In order to bring the course information together as a whole, students will write a 10 page paper which will be due at the end of the semester. The project topic will be of the student’s choosing, but it must be approved by the instructor.

For this project, students will take one or more topics covered in class throughout the course of the semester to explore further in detail. If multiple topics are being covered, they need to be properly related. Projects can range anywhere from an in-depth examination of a specific cultural dimension to comparing and contrasting specific elements (like colors, images, or symbols) used in different cultural advertising. Image use within your paper is
Assignments (cont.)
encouraged to help support explanations and descriptions, but should be used in an Appendix and referenced within the body copy. Any researched works should be cited within your text, and an appropriate bibliography should be included at the end.

The presentation of your final paper should follow the same format of your journal entries. That is, Times New Roman font at 12 point size, double spaced, with 1" margins on each side. Your citations and bibliography format should be in the 6th edition APA style. Information on how to use this citation style can be found at: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/

Projects are due at the final exam.

* Course written and developed by Brooke Scherer.
<table>
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<th>Intended Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Relevant Required Readings</th>
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<th>Results</th>
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| • Learned theories of visual communication | • *See What I mean: An Introduction to Visual Communication.* (Morgan & Welton) | • Critique and assess weekly journal entries and in-class discussions.  
• Critique understanding of material through final written culture project. | • Determine students’ understanding of different theories of visual communication. |
| • Cultural dimensions  
• Image differences  
• Individual vs. group context and meaning  
• Image construction through cultural dimension | • *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind.* (Hofstede and Hofstede)  
• *Cultural Psychology.* (Heine)  
• *The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently…and Why.* (Nisbett)  
• *Culture and Aesthetic Preference: Comparing the Attention to Context of East Asians and Americans.* (Masuda, Gonzalez, Kwan & Nisbett)  
• *Exploring Cultural Contents of Website Images.* (Bansal & Zahedi) | • Critique and assess weekly journal entries and in-class discussions.  
• Critique understanding of material through final written culture project. | • Determine students’ understanding of different cultural dimensions, differences in image meaning, social aspects of the individual versus the group, and how images are constructed in accordance to cultural dimension. |
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<td>• Consumer behavior in accordance to culture or social group.</td>
<td>• <em>Consumer Behavior and Culture: Consequences for Global Marketing and Advertising.</em> (De Mooij)</td>
<td>• Critique and assess weekly journal entries and in-class discussions.</td>
<td>• Determine students’ knowledge of how different cultural dimensions and beliefs affect consumer behavior.</td>
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<td>• Differences in color and semiotics (specifically within symbology) as defined by various cultures.</td>
<td>• <em>Creating Effective Advertising Using Semiotics.</em> (Nadin &amp; Zakia)</td>
<td>• Critique and assess weekly journal entries and in-class discussions.</td>
<td>• Determine students’ knowledge of basic definitions of semiotics and how different cultural dimensions and beliefs affect personal interpretation of color, image, and symbology.</td>
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<td>• <em>Global Graphics: Color: Designing with Color for an International Market.</em> (Peterson &amp; Cullen)</td>
<td>• Critique understanding of material through final written culture project.</td>
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<td>• <em>Global Graphics: Symbols: Designing with Symbols for an International Market.</em> (Miller, Brown, Cullen)</td>
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<td>• <em>Designing Across Cultures.</em> (Lipton)</td>
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<td>• <em>Mixing Messages: Graphic Design in Contemporary Culture.</em> (Lipton)</td>
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<td>• Cultural campaign examples: understanding what was successful and what went wrong.</td>
<td>• <em>McDonald’s ad banned due to insulting plot.</em> <em>(China Daily)</em></td>
<td>• Critique and assess weekly journal entries and in-class discussions.</td>
<td>• Determine students’ understanding of how the proper use or misuse of design elements or messages can affect the visual message relayed to an intended audience.</td>
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<td>• <em>Consumers’ Response to Offensive Advertising: A Cross Cultural Study.</em> <em>(Chan, Li, Diehl, &amp; Ralf)</em></td>
<td>• Critique understanding of material through final written culture project.</td>
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<td>• <em>Pepsi Steps Into Coke Realm: Red, China.</em> <em>(Chao &amp; McKay)</em></td>
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<td>• <em>Expanding Our Field of Vision: Globalization and the Changing Landscape of Visual Communications.</em> <em>(McCarron)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Analyze a pre-existing company’s American and cross-cultural advertising campaign to extract the design elements defining each.</td>
<td>• <em>Verizon Wireless American and Asian-American advertisements</em></td>
<td>• Critique understanding proper cultural components existing in current advertising through the information compiled in the Cultural Design Components Matrix.</td>
<td>• Determine students’ understanding of how to extract cultural elements within pre-existing advertising, as well as why these components were used within the visual communication.</td>
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APPENDIX F. SYLLABUS – APPLICATIONS OF CULTURAL DESIGN

Course Objective
Graphic design is an intricate mode of communication responsible for relaying accurate information to a given audience or group of people. Most recently, however, areas such as technology and globalization have allowed graphic designers new and unique opportunities to centralize their work around new worldwide audiences. This has not only changed who we design for, but also how we design. Intricate visual details such as color, imagery, context, layout, and symbology greatly differ from one social culture to the next, and these variances are important when creating any form of visual communication. Therefore, the goal of this course is to expand upon the knowledge and skill sets learned in the Visual Communication and Culture course and allow the student to put understanding into practice.

Course Content
Through in-depth research and assigned content, the student will complete four design projects for this course.

Project one: The student will be assigned a specific cultural audience and a specific design format.

Projects two through four: The student will be given a separate list of both cultural audiences and design formats. The student will combine three separate audiences with three separate formats to create a total of three final projects. The student will be allowed to choose their own combinations, however audience and design format cannot be used more than once.

Reading References
There are no required textbooks for this course, however the material covered in the Visual Communication and Culture seminar should be used for reference. This material includes:

1. See What I Mean: An Introduction to Visual Communication, by John Morgan and Peter Welton
2. Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind, by Geert Hofstede
3. The Geography of Thoughts: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently and Why, by Richard E. Nisbett
4. Consumer Behavior and Culture, by Marieke de Mooij
5. Creating Effective Advertising Using Semiotics, by Mahai Nadin and Richard D. Zakia
7. Global Graphics: Symbols, by Anastasia R. Miller & Jared M. Brown; Cheryl Dangel Cullen
8. Cultural Psychology, by Steven J. Heine
10. Mixing Messages: Graphic Design in Contemporary Culture, by Ellen Lupton
11. Designing Across Cultures, by Ronnie Lipton
12. Designing Across Cultures, by Ronnie Lipton
13. McDonald’s Ad Banned Due to Insulting Plot, China Daily
15. Pepsi Steps into Coke Realm: Red, China, by Loretta Chao and Besty McKay
APPENDIX G. APPLICATIONS OF CULTURAL DESIGN,
PROJECT ONE STATEMENT

Concept
The purpose of this project is to design a poster that visually represents and/or defines the makeup of a specific social culture (this culture will be assigned to you by the instructor). Paying close attention to color, imagery, context, symbology, and form, you will present a system of cultural ideas to the class through the design of your poster. Research will play a large role in the final outcome of your design, and should be adequately demonstrated through your work. Analysis through your work via the Cultural Design Components Matrix should be completed before project turn-in.

Process
After receiving an assigned social culture, your first step should be to thoroughly research your audience. Previously read texts should be referenced, but should not be the only form of information utilized. As you research, begin making lists of ideals, practices, beliefs, etc., that are important to the culture and you feel should be represented in your poster. Explore colors, images, symbols, etc., that are also important to the culture, documenting meaning and representations along the way. For example, if you find the color red is important to your culture, be sure to note why it is important and how it needs to be used. After adequate research has been compiled, combine the final color palette, typefaces, imagery choices, etc. within a properly documented style sheet.

Your next step will begin exploring the poster design. Start this process by experimenting with various layouts through (a minimum of 50-75) thumbnail sketches, paying close attention to grid structures, proper element placement, etc. From there, you will create larger (minimum 8.5” x 11”) sketches of ten thumbnails you would like to explore further in detail. These sketches should be greatly refined, implementing color, text, and imagery. Take one refined sketch (or a combination of refined sketches) to the computer for final development.

It is important for you to keep adequate documentation of your process work. Each major step or change within your computer design should be recorded (screenshots are fine). Make sure to annotate your process, explaining changes made and why.

Final Format
1. One (1) Poster design, 11” x 17” minimum in size, mounted on matte board with a 1” border on all sides. Include a tracing paper overlay.
2. A process notebook including an annotated design process and a thoroughly (typed) written analysis of the project. Include all conducted research, along with a final style sheet explaining why elements (such as color, typeface, imagery, etc.) were used. The process notebook should also contain a completed analysis through the Cultural Design Components Matrix.
3. Your final design file (rendered, flattened, and PDF) submitted on CD/DVD. Be sure to include all linked files and fonts used to create the poster.
APPENDIX H. APPLICATIONS OF CULTURAL DESIGN,
PROJECT TWO – FOUR STATEMENT

Concept
The purpose of projects two (2) through four (4) is to experiment with a variety of audiences and design formats to further build upon cultural knowledge previously learned. Paying close attention to color, imagery, context, symbology, and form, you will present three separate design systems to the class at designated final critiques. Research will play a large role in the final outcome of your designs, and should be adequately demonstrated through your work. Analysis through your work via the Cultural Design Components Matrix should be completed before project turn-in.

Process
For each project, you will combine one option from the demographic column with one design format in the adjacent column (listed below). You will have the freedom to choose your own combinations, however you can only use each option once. For example, if you decide to create a set of magazine advertisements for an Indian audience, neither the magazine nor the audience choice may be used again. Furthermore, if you choose to design for a Japanese audience for one project, no other Asian audience may be utilized a second time.

Demographics
A. Asia (Japan, Korea, China, or Thailand)
B. India
C. Mexico
D. Europe (England, France, Germany, or Italy)
E. American sub-culture (African-American or Hispanic)

Design Format
A. Corporate Identity (five different)
B. Posters (set of three)
C. Magazine advertisements (set of three)
D. Consumer website (five pages deep)
E. Packaging (set of three items)

After choosing a combination, your first step should be a thorough conduction of research. Previously read texts should be referenced, but should not be the only form of information utilized. As you research, begin making lists of ideals, practices, beliefs, etc., that are important to the culture and you feel should be represented in your project. Explore colors, images, etc., that are also important to the culture, documenting meaning and representations along the way. For example, if you find the color red is important to your culture, be sure to note why and how it needs to be used. After adequate research has been compiled, combine the final color palette, typefaces, imagery choices, etc. within a properly documented style sheet.

Your next step will begin exploring the design of your chosen format. Start this process by experimenting with various layouts through (a minimum of 50-75) thumbnail sketches, paying close attention to grid structures, proper element placement, etc. From there, you will create larger (minimum 8.5” x 11”) sketches of ten thumbnails you would like to explore further in detail. These sketches should be greatly refined, implementing color, text, and imagery. Take one refined sketch (or a combination of refined sketches) to the computer for final development. If you are working on a packaging project, rough 3d mock-ups should be created before applying your final design.

It is important for you to keep adequate documentation of your process work. Each major step or change within your computer design should be recorded (screenshots are fine). Make sure to annotate your process, explaining changes made and why.
Final Format

1. Three (1) designs completed and properly displayed for each final critique. Additionally, print all material to display together on an 11” x 17” presentation matte board (larger projects may be reduced in size to fit). You should have one presentation board for each format (three total).

2. A process notebook including an annotated design process and a thoroughly (typed) written analysis of the project. Include all conducted research, along with a final style sheet explaining why elements (such as color, typeface, imagery, etc.) were used. The process notebook should also contain a completed analysis through the Cultural Design Components Matrix.

3. Your final design file (rendered, flattened, and PDF) submitted on CD/DVD. Be sure to include all linked files and fonts used to create the poster.

* Course written and developed by Brooke Scherer.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intended Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Application</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Results</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Build upon previously learned material from the Visual Communication and Culture seminar class.</td>
<td>• Allow students the option to reference previously read material from the seminar course, but require additional resources be explored.</td>
<td>• Further exploration of content (aside from previously seminar provided material) is apparent through work and through process notebook.</td>
<td>• Students gain experience exploring other learning materials and versatile ways of researching for appropriate cultural content.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Gain further experience with and build upon proper cultural research methods.</td>
<td>• Utilize other various reference material for the completion of each of the four (4) projects.</td>
<td>• Research and application is documented well within the students’ process notebooks.</td>
<td>• Students gain experience exploring other learning materials and versatile ways of researching for appropriate cultural content.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Engage the student with detailed learning about one specific culture.</td>
<td>• Students are assigned a specific culture by the instructor for assignment one (1). This is a more controlled process which should act as a warm-up exercise for the completion of projects two (2) - four (4).</td>
<td>• Research and appropriate content is apparent through the design of project one (1) poster and the student’s process notebook.</td>
<td>• Being a controlled project, students gain experience in researching methods and appropriate design content required for a specified culture. • Students feel more comfortable with the research process and with their researching abilities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Explore and learn about various cultural design processes.</td>
<td>• Allow students to have a choice in the culture for which they design in projects two (2) - four (4).</td>
<td>• Research and appropriate content is apparent through the design of project two (2) - four (4) and the student’s process notebook.</td>
<td>• Students gain experience in researching methods and appropriate design content required for a specified culture. • Students feel more comfortable with the research process and with their researching abilities.</td>
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<td>Intended Learning Outcomes</td>
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<td>• Begin the practice of graphic design through the completion of various projects.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Students are given a list of design formats for which they will combine one format with one chosen cultural audience in projects two (2) - four (4).</td>
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<td>• Research and appropriate content is apparent through the design of project two (2) - four (4) and the student’s process notebook.</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Students gain experience in designing for specific formats.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Students gain experience with designing specific formats for specified cultural audiences.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Students gain experience using color, grid systems, layout, and typography.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Intended Learning Outcomes</th>
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<td>• Supplement additional learning material through peer work and final presentations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Conduct small group sessions throughout the duration of each design project.</td>
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<td>• Conduct interim critiques.</td>
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<td>• Conduct final critiques at the end of each project.</td>
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<td>• Students engage in small group and critique discussions, asking questions and providing input.</td>
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<td>• Students take additional material learned from peers and integrate it within their own project material.</td>
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<th>Results</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Students learn that their peers are valuable resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students gain social skills through interaction and communication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students build additional knowledge not already learned through their own research from the additional research provided and displayed through peer projects and presentations.</td>
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my greatest appreciation to those involved in helping me complete my thesis. First, to Sunghyun Kang, whose dedication, assistance, and patience have helped guide and inspire me within my specific research area. I would also like to thank the members of my thesis committee, Lisa Fontaine and Mark Rectanus. Through your additional areas of specialization, I feel I have been able to create a thesis that will help further the field and practice of graphic design. With the knowledge I have gained throughout this writing process, I hope to avidly continue my research in cultural studies integration throughout the rest of my academic career.

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