# Chapter 11 The Way Ahead: Critical Directions for Future Research in Cross-Cultural Management

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The chapters in this book have discussed cross-cultural competence, global leadership, multinational teams, and cross-cultural conflict management, not only based on scientific research but also from years of experience, knowledge, and expertise in the field. To the degree that today's world is constantly changing, organizational needs and areas of interests are also changing and evolving. Despite the importance and need for cross-cultural competence and leadership, there is much more that needs to be studied and answered. So, what is next for cross-cultural management?

In this chapter, we identify several key areas that we believe need significantly more research, provide some directions for future research, and provoke thoughts on cross-cultural management. There are eight areas we have identified for future directions: (1) talent management of global leaders; (2) person–environment fit in the cross-cultural context; (3) team-level competence in the cross-cultural context; (4) universal values, processes, and competencies; (5) cross-cultural ethical conflicts; (6) metaphors, languages, and alternatives; (7) cross-cultural trust development, violation, and repair; and (8) cross-cultural bias.

#### **Research Need 1: Talent Management of Global Leaders**

Throughout this book, it has been established that leaders play a very important role in developing and managing cross-cultural teams and competence. However, there is a shortage of competent leaders in many fields (Collings and Mellahi 2009).

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Given the scarcity of effective leadership, and the complexity of cross-cultural contexts, we need best practices regarding how to select, develop, and maintain global leaders as well as how to share knowledge and talent across them. In other words, effective talent management of global leaders is critical for the future of global organizations.

Global talent management includes attracting, developing, and retaining "individuals with high levels of human capital (e.g., competency, personality, motivation) consistent with the strategic directions of the multinational enterprise in a dynamic, highly competitive, and global environment" (Tarique and Schuler 2010, p. 124). It is an important and significant topic because organizations need diverse talents to be successful, innovative, and adaptive. Talent management is also forward looking and proactive such that it is a continuous process that plans talent needs, builds an image and reputation to attract and retain top talent, and facilitates the continuous movement and strategic integration of talent in places where they can have the most impact. Not only do we need to develop, select, and retain global leaders, but also we need to manage and share their knowledge, expertise, and experiences. Through knowledge management and sharing, individuals, teams, and other leaders can all benefit, and organizations can retain those resources.

Surprisingly, there is little research on talent management of global leaders specifically, although some research has been done to study leadership development in general. Church et al. (2015) found that assessments were used in organizations most commonly for identifying high potential talents and for succession planning for senior executives. The three most commonly used assessments were 360 degree feedback, personality inventories, and interviews. Unsurprisingly, the most commonly used criterion for identifying high potential talents was performance, including both past and current performance. Additionally, Ruvolo et al. (2004) gave a framework for leadership development as follows:

Experience + New Knowledge (with support & feedback) + Reflection + TIME (more practice/experience) = Leadership Growth and Development (p. 13)

Based on this framework, leadership growth and development is achieved by previous experience, gaining new knowledge, getting feedback, learning from others and reflection, and more experience over time. Additionally, leadership development activities must be ingrained in the organizational culture because without the organizational support, resources, and emphasis on leadership development, these activities would not be successful.

However, more research is needed to examine whether what we know from the literature regarding domestic leadership development and talent management can also be applied in the global context. Not only is global leadership identification and development important, but also retaining these global leaders and their knowledge management are also necessary. After all the investments in selecting and developing global leaders, if we do not retain and manage them, the investments will be a waste. The followers can also face more difficulties in achieving their goals without the support from leadership and with constant changes in leadership. Therefore,

the following topics are suggested for future research on global leader talent management:

- · Tools and methods to identify, develop, and select global leaders
- Motivational and reward systems to retain global leaders
- Global leadership knowledge sharing and management (e.g., establishing systems and procedures).

# **Research Need 2: Person–Environment Fit** in the Cross-Cultural Context

Once global employees are selected, decisions must be made in terms of what cross-cultural teams, leaders, and environments they will be assigned to. Then, the question becomes how we select them to fit with the leaders, teams, environments, and goals in the cross-cultural context. A lot of research has been done on personenvironment fit and on the outcomes when there is a person-environment fit. Person-environment fit is the extent to which an individual is matched or compatible with work environmental characteristics. The premise is that both individuals and the environment they are in account for their behaviors and performance. Person-environment fit has five dimensions: person-vocation fit, person-job fit, person-organization fit, person-group fit, and person-supervisor fit (Kristof-Brown et al. 2005). Person-vocation (P-V) fit happens when one has a career or occupation that fits with one's interests and goals. Person-job (P-J) fit happens when one has knowledge, skills, and abilities that can meet demands and requirements of the job (demands-abilities fit) and when one's needs and values are met by the job (needs-supplies or supplies-values fit). Person-organization (P-O) fit occurs when one's personality, goals, and values fit with those of the organization one is in. Person-group (P-G) fit and person-supervisor (P-S) fit happen when there is compatibility between one's personality, goals, and values and those of the group and supervisor, respectively.

A meta-analytic study of Kristof-Brown et al. (2005) examined the outcomes when there was a person–environment fit at the workplace. Job satisfaction was most strongly related to P–J fit, and organizational commitment to P–O fit closely followed by P–J fit. As expected, satisfaction with coworkers was highest with P–G fit, and satisfaction with supervisors with P–S fit. Organizational attraction was moderately influenced by P–J and P–O fits. In addition, there were moderate to small correlations between overall performance and P–J, P–G, and P–S fits. Finally, P–J, P–O, and P–G fits had moderate, negative relationships with intent to quit. Thus, individual attitudes and behaviors are influenced by the perception of the person–environment fit, and both individuals and organizations can benefit from the person–environment fit. To compare fit cross-culturally, in their recent meta-analysis, Oh et al. (2014) examined the effects of person–environment fit on a number of organizational outcomes across cultures, and these outcomes included job satisfaction, organizational commitment, intent to quit, organizational citizenship behavior, and job performance. They found that P–J fit and P–O fit had stronger effects in North American and Europe to a less extent than in East Asia, whereas P–G fit and P–S fit had stronger effects in East Asia than in North America because of the value of collectivism and high power distance in East Asia. On top of that, person–environment fit could be found across all cultures, and the higher the fit, the more likely it would lead to positive organizational outcomes.

These studies indicate that fit matters and that when it happens, it leads to positive outcomes. Nevertheless, a lot of research on this topic is conducted to understand the relationship between fit and its outcomes. There is little research on strategies or approaches to ensure fit and on fit particularly in the cross-cultural context. Given all these benefits, more insights are needed to understand:

- How to determine and select individuals to ensure fit particularly in the cross-cultural context
- Factors, including individual, organizational, and situational characteristics, which can be beneficial or detrimental to the cross-cultural fit.

# **Research Need 3: Team-Level Competence** in the Cross-Cultural Context

Throughout this book, we have discussed the individual-level cross-cultural competencies needed to be successful when working in a different culture or with people from different cultures and how to best develop these competencies. Given the complexity of the cross-cultural context, it is unclear if individual-level cross-cultural competence is enough to attain success in global teams and organizations as a whole. At the same time, organizations are using teams more and more to accomplish goals, and technology also allows them to form teams and groups from different geographical locations and cultures. Since teams can accomplish more than individuals, we need to know more about what it means to be cross-culturally competent as a team or organization, and whether or not team-level cross-cultural competence can produce better results than individual-level competence alone.

This is based on the concepts of isomorphism and discontinuity in the multilevel model theory of Kozlowski and Klein (2000). Isomorphism assumes that knowledge, skills, and abilities are more or less similar for all individuals in the team. On the other hand, discontinuity assumes that what individuals contribute to the team is different, not shared in terms of overlapping, but compatible. To put it in another

way, team-level competence is a higher level construct and emerges from a lower level construct individual competence. These two levels of construct have similar meanings, influence each other, and can occur simultaneously (Kauffeld 2006). Team-level competence, however, is more than the sum of individual team members because through interactions, knowledge, skills, behaviors, and attitudes can be changed and complemented, hence changing the entire team as a system.

Kauffeld (2006) studied the competence of self-directed teams by group-level analysis and compared it to the competence of traditional teams in completing organizational tasks. Four facets of competence were also examined: professional competence, methodological competence, social competence, and self-competence. Professional competence was the sum of specific professional skills and knowledge that team members had. Methodological competence was the ability to find and apply resources and means to accomplish goals, and social competence was the ability to communicate and collaborate with each other in a self-organized, proactive way. Self-competence concerned with the willingness to create situations for growth and improvement. It was found that self-directed teams were more competent than traditional teams in completing tasks. Moreover, self-directed teams showed greater professional, methodological, and self-competence than traditional teams.

In order to enhance team-level cross-cultural competence, Brandl and Neyer (2009) propose cross-cultural training using the cognitive adjustment theory especially in global virtual teams that have to deal with uncertain situations and behaviors. Based on the cognitive adjustment theory, when individuals are in an uncertain situation, they have to adjust their way of thinking and learn to interpret the situation correctly. They also need to adapt their behaviors to the highly diverse, technologically-mediated situation and be sensitive to the various beliefs, values, and norms in the situation. In contrast, culture orientation programs only teach them general theories of differences in self-identity, relationships, communication, and conflict management across cultures. However, culture is such a broad concept that there is no best theory to completely capture and understand all aspects of a culture. Therefore, Brandl and Neyer (2009) call for the seemingly more effective cross-cultural training based on the cognitive adjustment theory. This theory provides one useful first step toward exploring cross-cultural competence at higher levels, but more research is still needed in:

- Understanding the concept of cross-cultural competence at higher levels of analysis (i.e., what does it mean to be a cross-cultural competent team or organization?)
- Theory and evidence on cross-cultural competence at a higher level
- Benefits or drawbacks of higher level cross-cultural competence
- Conditions and constraints in the emergence of higher level cross-cultural competence
- Training and development for higher level cross-cultural competence.

# **Research Need 4: Universal Values, Processes, and Competencies**

One of the obvious thoughts when it comes to discussing cultures is the difference across them. Differences—small and big—do exist, and conflicts can happen due to these differences. However, in conflict management as well as working in teams, establishing common ground in terms of, for example, goals, values, and processes, is essential for a mutual understanding, conflict resolution, and effective teamwork (e.g., Cramton 2002).

Although many studies focus on what the cultural differences are and how to overcome them, there are a few studies that have been conducted related to universal values, processes, and competencies across cultures. As previously mentioned, Oh et al. (2014) found that regardless of which cultures individuals were in, person-environment fit was a phenomenon, and if a person achieved fit with their environment, it led to positive outcomes. Gentry and Sparks (2012) also studied leadership competencies that were valued across 40 countries and that were perceived by managers at different levels in organizations as necessary for the success in organizations. They found that three types of leadership competencies—resourcefulness, change management, and building and mending relationships-were globally valued and needed for organizational success; however, no such value or need was found for balancing personal life and work. Peterson (2007) claimed that due to the globalization, senior executives increasingly shared similar experiences, for example, experiencing similar market demands and complexities in their organizations and even reading the same books and journals. Moreover, many countries were also adopting Western leadership styles in the emergent global culture. Thus, although there is some promising research examining universal elements of culture, the following areas are suggested for continuing future research.

- The emergence of global culture
- Values, processes, and competencies that are universally respected and needed for the success and effectiveness of cross-cultural teams and organizations.

The social identity theory of intergroup behaviors explains that we strive to achieve a positive social identity by favoring those who are in the same social group or share the social identity (in-group) than those who are not in the same social group (out-group; Jackson et al. 1999). In other words, we tend to like more and give more favorable ratings to in-group members than out-group members. In the cross-cultural context, if groups from different cultures share something and consider each other as in-group members, they are more likely to come together and work collaboratively. Therefore, future research on the suggested areas will help understand and achieve perceptions of in-group membership.

#### **Research Need 5: Cross-Cultural Ethical Conflicts**

Cultural conflicts can take different forms including interpersonal, legal, and ethical. One type of conflict that can be especially problematic, but is relatively underdiscussed in the cross-cultural management literature, is ethical conflict. Ethical conflicts refer to disagreements over what is right and wrong or moral and immoral, whereas legal conflicts are about laws and institutional procedures and policies (Sanchez-Runde et al. 2013). Individuals and organizations in different cultures have different values and definitions of ethical and unethical behaviors that often result in ambiguous situations and uncomfortable conflicts. For instance, bribery might be considered unethical and unfair in Western cultures whereas it may be considered acceptable and even desirable and necessary in building professional relationships in many other cultures. Moreover, culture also plays a role in using different approaches to resolving ethical conflicts. For example, Chinese prefer that someone from the senior management gets involved and solves the ethical conflicts, whereas Americans prefer egalitarianism in terms of ethical decision making (Pan et al. 2010).

While there is a relative lack of empirical research on cross-cultural ethical conflicts, Sanchez-Runde et al. (2013) give some useful suggestions to deal with cross-cultural ethical conflicts. To being with, individuals and organizations have their own preferences over business practices, and they find that most of the time, disagreements over these preferences lead to ethical conflicts. So, it is important to discuss and agree on the practices that they will use. Additionally, it is recommended to discuss and negotiate their level of tolerance for different values. Through understanding of the values and practices and tolerance of each other, the ethical conflicts can be reduced and resolved. Likewise, based on how Google, Yahoo, and MSN handled censorships in China, Hamilton et al. (2008) give six heuristic questions as guidelines in solving ethical dilemmas. They suggest weighing ethical implications and the values and benefits added to the host country by following a particular practice.

As research regarding cross-cultural ethical conflicts has been conducted in clinical psychology (e.g., Knapp and VandeCreek 2007; Strom et al. 2012), more research—both theoretical and empirical—is needed in more traditional organizational settings. Hence, we call for more research in the following areas:

- Cross-cultural ethical values and conflicts in global organizations
- Cross-cultural ethical conflict management and resolution.

# **Research Need 6: Novel Approaches to Cross-Cultural Communication**

When there are differences and conflicts within cross-cultural relationships, not everyone has the same reactions or approaches to solve them. To make the matter more complicated, the same word often has different meanings and implications in different cultures, which can cause miscommunication and misunderstanding. Therefore, it is important not only to understand different metaphors and languages used by different cultures, but also to identify approaches that all individuals from different cultures can use to mitigate these linguistic difficulties.

Stories, metaphors, and storytelling have been found to be effective strategies for communicating ideas as well as making sense of different environments. In particular, Yost et al. (2015) found that in the U.S., when people shared work-related stories, such as career challenges, crossroads, and leading successful and unsuccessful projects, their underlying motivation focused on achievement and responsibilities. In other words, they consistently strived for goal achievement and personal mastery. When sharing positive stories, they exhibited internal locus of control where they took responsibilities of the outcomes and focused on personal strengths. When sharing negative stories, they separated themselves from negative outcomes and focused on their positive roles in the situations and personal growth. In other words, the stories that were shared reflected the underlying values without explicitly naming those values. In this way, storytelling can be an effective way to connect people across cultures by illustrating underlying similarities or differences in beliefs, values, and norms.

In addition, Gibson and Zellmer-Bruhn (2001) studied the use of the following five metaphors in the U.S., France, Puerto Rico, and Philippines in describing team-related concepts (e.g., teamwork, team motivation, mental images of teams, and the cultural impact on teams): family, sports, community, associates, and military. They found that the higher the power distance in the national and organizational culture, the more use of metaphors with clear role content. When there was more emphasis on performance, metaphors, such as sports and military, were used more. Individualistic cultures used the metaphors of sports and associates more. In comparing four countries, the community metaphor was used more in Philippines than in the U.S., the military metaphor more in Puerto Rico. In other words, while the concepts of teams and teamwork were cultural universal to some extent, the metaphors used to describe them differed, and also revealed underlying differences in values and perspectives.

von Glinow et al. (2004) studied emotional conflicts—experiencing negative emotions such as anger and frustration—in multicultural teams and how to resolve these conflicts. Emotional conflicts occurred in teams because of members' differences in values, beliefs, mental models, and language interpretations. In resolving emotional conflicts, a typical way, or the Western style, was to talk because the lack of talk, such as withdrawal, avoidance, and stonewalling, was not seen as effective. However, talking in conflict resolution was not always the best method, especially in multicultural teams. When experiencing these conflicts, individuals could not verbalize their thoughts, express their feelings well, or communicate effectively. Therefore, von Glinow and colleagues suggested the use of visual aids (e.g., drawing) and aesthetic activities (e.g., music; also see Nissley 2002) as alternative or additional methods to talking in conflict management. For example, in 2002, to commemorate the first anniversary of the 9/11 disaster, a moment of silence and choral singing occurred worldwide to communicate the emotional conflicts caused by the 9/11 disaster and its memories. Another example was from the study of Gibson and Zellmer-Bruhn (as cited in von Glinow et al. 2004) where they asked individuals from different cultures to use metaphors to explain what teamwork meant to them. Using both visual and verbal processes helped in understanding different cultural meanings of teamwork.

Taken together, these studies suggest that although individuals in different cultures tend to use different story themes and metaphors to describe the same concepts, the use of stories and metaphors could be effective strategies for improving cross-cultural communication and understanding. Moreover, there are non-verbal alternatives, such as drawing and music, which everyone can understand despite cultural differences. Therefore, more research is needed to understand:

- The use of metaphors and storytelling for communication across cultures
- Effective alternative (e.g., visual, musical) approaches in resolving conflict
- The role of technology in the use of stories, metaphors, and non-verbal communication techniques.

# **Research Need 7: Cross-Cultural Trust Development,** Violation, and Repair

Trust, defined as the willingness to be vulnerable to another individual based on positive expectations of their behavior, is a critical element to success interpersonal interactions, especially cross-cultural interactions (Dirks and Ferrin 2001; Lewicki and Bunker 1996). While trust is the foundation of all types of relationships, the dynamics of trust development can vary widely across cultures (Doney et al. 1998; Fehr and Gelfand 2010; Ren and Gray 2009).

In a study using an investment game, Chinese were found to show higher trust and reciprocity towards other players in the game, whereas Japanese had lower trust and reciprocity (Buchan et al. 2002). Americans showed higher trust but lower reciprocity while Koreans showed lower trust but higher reciprocity. Interestingly, Yuki et al. (2005) found that when interacting with strangers, Americans showed higher trust in in-group members, who shared the same membership with them, than out-group members. Japanese, on the other hand, showed higher trust in those who had direct or indirect interpersonal connections (e.g., knowing someone perfriend) regardless of in-group or sonally or through а out-group membership. However, the reason for the difference in Americans and Japanese was unclear as Buchan et al. (2002) found that similarity in identity did not play a role in such difference.

Beyond these differences in trust propensities and development across cultures, conflicts are nearly inevitable in cross-cultural relationships, and as a result, trust violations are a likely occurrence. Trust violation occurs when the violated party's or the victim's positive expectations and perceptions of the offender or the violator

are challenged or disconfirmed by the violator. Nonetheless, there are only a few studies on the dynamics of trust violation, strategies of repairing trust, and the differences in their effectiveness across cultures.

One of the few empirical studies conducted to understand cross-cultural differences in trust repair and restoration was the study of Kuwabara et al. (2014). They examined the relationships between generalized trust and the timing of violations across participants from the United States and Japan. Generalized trust was the general tendency to trust people, including strangers. The U.S. has a high-trust culture because the long-term relationships are mobile. Japan, on the other hand, has a low-trust culture because it is a collectivistic culture with stable social connections. They found that trust violation in the early establishment of relationship was more damaging to the relationship only among Americans but not among Japanese. Trust violation was more damaging to the relationship if it happened at a later time only for Japanese because the violation threatened the stability of the relationship. In addition, generalized trust not only was higher among Americans, but also mattered more for them. In early trust violation, the higher the generalized trust, the more likely that Americans could fully cooperate.

Ren and Gray (2009) also present a theoretical framework of the effectiveness of trust restoration depending on violation types and culture. Two types of violation are identity violation and violation of control. Identity violation happens when the victim's identity is challenged or threatened, and the victim loses face because the violator breaks the expectations of being respectful and considerate of the victim. Violation of control occurs when the victim's ability to influence over something or someone is challenged. Violation of control breaks the expectancy and equity norms and challenges the expectations that resources will be fairly allocated and distributed. In addition to the types of violation, individualistic culture emphasizes having a unique, independent self from the group, one's own achievements, and needs. Collectivistic culture emphasizes relatedness to the group, conformity, and meeting others' needs.

Hence, Ren and Gray (2009) propose that the collectivistic violator is more likely to suppress negative emotions after trust violation and to use indirect means of communication because direct confrontations will challenge the stability of the relationship. Moreover, after identity violation, an explanation and apology through a third party as well as a demonstration of concern and consideration toward the victim will be more effective for the collectivistic violator to repair trust than for the individualistic violator. Similarly, after violation of control, not only reframing the situation and giving a genuine explanation though a third party but also showing guilt and offering redemption privately will be more effective for the collectivistic violator than for the individualistic violator. Although this study is not an empirical study, Ren and Gray (2009) explore possible cultural differences in the effectiveness of strategies to repair trust. As we still have a lot to understand and learn in terms of trust development and repair in the cross-cultural context, more research is needed in the following areas:

- Initial trust and trust development in cross-cultural interpersonal relationships
- Types of violation and the differences in their consequences across cultures
- Effectiveness of trust repair activities and restoration in different cultures.

#### **Research Need 8: Cross-Cultural Bias**

As we know, culture is an inherently multilevel phenomenon that can manifest at the individual, team, organizational, and national levels. Methodological issues in cross-cultural management research are important because there is a limited generalizability across different levels and cultures (Taras et al. 2009). Bias can occur not only in measurements themselves, but also in interpretation of scores from the studies (van de Vijver and Poortinga 1997). Based on their analysis of 121 instruments, Taras et al. (2009) present methodological biases in cross-cultural equivalence. First, they find that self-report questionnaires are commonly used in cross-cultural studies, but the results from these self-reports are individual-level. Data aggregation from the results does not always represent higher levels of culture such as the national cultural context within which the research is embedded. Second, reliability and validity of scales cannot always be generalized across levels and cultures. For example, a reliable and valid educational test given to American test takers was found to be inadequate for non-American test takers (van de Vijver and Poortinga 1997). Last, but not least, measurement scales and wording in these scales as well as test questions can have different meanings and result in different interpretations across cultures, making comparative research difficult to execute and interpret.

Although the focus of this book is not on methodological or psychometrics issues, it is important to be aware of the various cross-cultural biases that could be influencing research results as we strive to study cross-cultural management issues and apply them in global organizations. Thus, future research needs to explicitly consider the potential cross-cultural biases in measurements and applications so that study results can be more reliable and valid and result in desirable outcomes for individuals, teams, and organizations involved.

#### **Final Thoughts**

We hope that the research findings, practices, and experiences by academic scholars, practitioners, and military experts in this book will help you better understand and manage these cross-cultural topics and issues. We also hope that this book serves as an integration of cross-cultural research and practices as well as a source for new areas of interest and best practices. If you, your team, or your

organization encounters cross-cultural issues or has creative insights, please let us know. As always, our team at the Institute for Cross Cultural Management is eager and ready for new ideas, learning, practices, and challenges.

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