

ACADEMIC GLOBALIZATION: UNIVERSALITY OF CROSS-CULTURAL and CROSS-DISCIPLINARY LMR PERSPECTIVES

Marta Szabo WHITE
Department of Managerial Sciences,
Georgia State University
Atlanta, Georgia 30303, USA

ABSTRACT

The contribution of this paper suggests that previous research underscoring cross-cultural differences may be misleading, when in fact it is cross-professional rather than cross-cultural differences that should be emphasized. Employing the LMR framework, this paper concludes that business or non-business predisposition has a more direct impact on one's individual cultural profile than does nationality. Regardless of culture, persons involved in business are characterized primarily by linear-active modes of communication, and persons not involved in business typically employ less linear and more multi-active/hybrid modes of communication. The linkages among individual characteristics, communication styles, work behaviors, and the extent to which the LMR constructs can facilitate and predict leadership, negotiating styles, individual behaviors, etc. are central to academic globalization and preparing global business leaders.

Keywords: International Business, Culture, Strategic Management, Communication, Leadership, Decision-making

INTRODUCTION

With the explosion of the internet, international business operates in a truly global milieu where culture remains the

only barrier. Consistent with *Academic Globalization*, this paper builds on previous works that teach national/international business cultures, and employs a more recent paradigm, one that is universally applicable and yet focuses on the individual as the unit of analysis.

BACKGROUND

While immersed in a Study Abroad Program to Great Britain (1999), I discovered and purchased *Gulliver* [5] for \$400, a fundamental cross-cultural learning tool and precursor to Cultureactive. When I shared my find with Duke, Jeff Russell began collaborating with Richard Lewis Communications to facilitate the innovation of Cultureactive, and subsequent evolution to ICE [InterCultural Edge].

ICE is a collaborative initiative between the Fuqua School of Business, Duke CIBER, Richard Lewis Communications, and Cultureactive.com. Cultureactive and ICE are web-based products that teach cross-cultural awareness in business settings by focusing on individual cultural profiles which are then compared to national profiles using the Linear-active, Multi-active, and Reactive [LMR] constructs. Participants analyze personal assessments with both team results and national cultural profiles. Experiments with ICE have been conducted at Fuqua (Duke University), Robinson (Georgia State) and around the world to provide a broad research base in fulfillment of rigorous academic standards for ICE validation.

Prior theoretical frameworks for studying cultural differences include the Kluckhohn-Strodtbeck, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, and most notably, Hofstede [2, 7, 13, 16]. More recently, the Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness [GLOBE] [9] analyzed data on 18,000 managers in 62 countries. Like

Hofstede, Kluckhohn-Strodtbeck, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, the GLOBE results also established cross-cultural differences among countries. While these works are familiar to most, the Lewis model is not as widely cited, perhaps because it is grounded in experience rather than research. However, this author argues that the LMR framework transcends previous models by placing the individual, rather than the nation-state, center stage.

LMR FRAMEWORK

The LMR framework was conceived by Richard Lewis, author of *When Cultures Collide* [10] and *The Cultural Imperative* [11]. Lewis' forty-plus years of cross-cultural consulting serve as the basis for this framework, which in turn gives rise to the first-generation Cultureactive, and second-generation InterCultural Edge [ICE]. The ICE project includes Project Academic Advisors, Teaching Consortium Advisors, a Core Research Team, and a Cross-National Research Team. The CIBER Research and Teaching Consortia have been commissioned to conduct the research validation for ICE and establish a certified teaching network.

During the conceptual reconfiguration of Cultureactive and evolution to ICE, one of the fundamental questions has been whether one's business affinity or cultural mindset has a more direct effect on individual cultural profiles and leadership/communication styles. To test this hypothesis, the samples for this paper come from several multi-cultural sources: European Fulbright students, Sub-Saharan African entrepreneurs, Duke and Georgia State University [GSU] MBA students, and GSU undergraduate students. The contribution of this paper is that it underscores the striking similarities for business persons regardless of culture, and

the equally striking commonalities for non-business persons.

LMR PROVENANCE: RICHARD LEWIS

Cross-cultural instruction was in acute demand in the 1980s, and Richard Lewis was repeatedly approached by multinational clients for a new and practical cultural/national classification system. For years, cross-culturalists had grappled with the problem of summarizing or simplifying national characteristics. Hofstede chose four dimensions- power distance, collectivism versus individualism, femininity versus masculinity and uncertainty avoidance. Later he added long-term versus short-term orientation. Edward Hall classified groups as monochronic or polychronic, high or low context and past- or future-oriented. Trompenaars' dimensions emerged as universalist versus particularist, individualist versus collectivist, specific versus diffuse, achievement-oriented versus ascription and neutral versus emotional (affective). Kluckhohn explored five dimensions – attitude to problems – time, nature, nature of man, form of activity and relation to one's cultural compatriots. The GLOBE research [9] cites differences along several cultural dimensions, such as Assertiveness, Future Orientation, Gender Differentiation, Uncertainty Avoidance, Power Distance, Institutional Collectivism, In-Group Collectivism, Performance Orientation and Human Orientation. Lewis notes that such categorization attempts were very different from each other and often proved difficult to use as tools for assessing the cultural capital that existed among employees.

A categorization that was succinct, easily understood, and comprehensive in coverage was sought. Lewis did not feel that any of the previous models had met the practical criteria required. In Lewis' assessment, Hall was sound and succinct,

but did not focus on solutions. Hofstede's idea of judging people by their uncertainty avoidance and reaction to power distance, was novel, but only partly character-descriptive, and few people knew what he meant by masculinity and femininity. Trompenaars, pre-empted by Hofstede and Hall, compensated with more dimensions, which did little to provide more distinction.

Richard Lewis wondered whether managers even have employees who are diffuse, ascriptive, particularist, neutral or affective, and if so, how should they be managed? Lewis proposed that cultures could be classified more comprehensively according to the following three categories, comprising the LMR framework [10, 11]:

Linear-actives

Cultures which are task-oriented, plan, organize, schedule and pursue one thing at a time (e.g. Germans, Swiss).

Multi-actives

Cultures which are lively, loquacious, multitask, prioritize according to the importance or thrill of the event (e.g. Italians, Latin Americans, and Arabs).

Reactives

Cultures that prioritize courtesy and respect, listen quietly, and react carefully to proposals (e.g. Chinese, Japanese and Finns).

Lewis argued that *linear-active* and *multi-active* are better terms than *monochronic* and *polychronic* in that they do not restrict themselves to the use of time. A new dimension was the reactive category, indicative of the behavior of most Asians, but overlooked by previous categorizations. The focus of the Lewis model is communication, which is so often the stumbling-block between cultures, and commensurately a key strategic consideration.

LMR UNIVERSALITY

Capitalizing on the LMR framework, a group of non-business participants from the Summer Institutes for European Student Leaders, a Fulbright outreach project, are compared with business persons from Sub-Saharan Africa, MBAs from Duke University and GSU graduates and undergraduates, to reveal that regardless of national culture, persons with an affinity for business are characterized primarily by linear-active modes of leadership/communication, and persons involved in non-business typically employ less linear-active and more hybrid and multi-active modes of leadership/communication.

In previous samples, business orientation itself has played a major role in unifying groups across the globe in terms of underscoring a strong linear-active commonality amongst business professionals and business students. The contribution of this paper is that for the first time, we have a cross-disciplinary sample that represents both business and non-business orientations with profound distinctions.

The universality across cultures and across disciplines, i.e. business vs. non-business, is substantiated in this paper, which is supported by trends emerging in previous works. There are more leadership/communication similarities among business persons from Sub-Saharan African, MBAs and undergraduate business majors than there are dissimilarities. Equally striking are the similarities among non-business persons as represented by Fulbright outreach students from six European countries. They share a different yet equally powerful leadership/communication model. The following table summarizes the LMR results for the different groups. Note how similar the LMR means are for the first nine groups,

and how different the last, non-business group is.

GROUPS		LINEAR-ACTIVE	MULTI-ACTIVE	REACTIVE
SUB-SAHARAN GROUP	N= 16	6.9	3.7	4.4
CIBER DIRECTORS	N= 27	7.1	5.0	2.9
BUSINESS PROFESSORS	N= 8	8.0	4.9	2.1
GSU MIBs ¹	N= 10	7.7	4.2	3.1
GSU HONORS UNDERGRADS	N= 9	7.2	4.0	3.8
GSU UNDERGRADS	N= 25	8.2	3.8	3.0
GSU CHINA STUDY ABROAD STUDENTS-GRADS & UNDERGRADS	N= 30	7.8	3.8	3.4
GSU RUSSIA STUDY ABROAD STUDENTS-GRADS & UNDERGRADS	N= 11	6.8	4.3	3.9
GSU GREECE STUDY ABROAD STUDENTS-GRADS & UNDERGRADS	N= 13	7.1	4.1	3.8
EUROPEAN FULBRIGHT STUDENTS	N= 35	5.9	5.6	3.5

¹ Master of International Business

The differences between the European, non-business students (last group) and the previous nine business groups are significant for linear-actives and multi-actives at $\alpha = .005$ level.

From a strategic perspective, it becomes imperative to understand that business orientation is a global mindset that is characterized by predominantly linear-active thought. This newest study in the series of LMR investigations further substantiates the different communication styles of predominantly linear-actives as represented by business-persons around the world, and linear-active/multi-active mode of communication represented by non-business professionals. While this is a small sample and generalizations should be limited until further study can replicate these initial findings, it is most interesting to consider the implications for academic globalization.

As the unit of analysis for the LMR framework is the individual, and these results yield implications for work habits, negotiating styles and cognitive processes, regardless of country, then perhaps it is the organizational culture and not the national culture that drives differences and incompatibilities between and among organizations? For example, Jackson and Schuler [9] note that the DaimlerChrysler difficulties derived from differing organizational cultures and management philosophies, rather than from clashes between German and American cultures. These differences coupled with acquisition complexities resulted in the divestiture of Chrysler. The point should be made that it is almost impossible to distinguish organizational from national culture. Moreover, organizational cultures emerge within the context of country cultures, thus further compounding research in this area. Even within a country, a myriad of different organizational cultures develop.

The strategic implications from these results contradict previous findings in substantiating that for these European, Sub-Saharan, Duke University and GSU samples, business persons share a similar, linear-active perspectives as do business persons from other parts of the world in terms of culture, communication and commerce. Non-business persons share a different paradigm. National culture does not determine individual behavior. Importantly, business propensity itself, and non-business propensity have a stronger influence than does nationality. When it comes to business, Africa shares a more similarities than differences with the rest of the world.

CONCLUSION

Richard Lewis' contributions were made through the lens of practitioner and teacher of cross-cultural communication. Lewis spent much of his life learning languages and observing communication styles. Intuitively, his model has a practical validity to it. CIBER at Duke University was inspired by this experiential model, and is transforming it into the theoretically-grounded InterCultural Edge (ICE). The ICE research project led by Duke University invokes a more rigorous methodology and applies strong psychometric properties to the Lewis framework, resulting in a more powerful tool on the horizon for practitioners and academicians.

As the world moves toward globalization, ICE and Cultureactive provide important tools for understanding and managing cultural diversity so that creativity, innovation and a global mindset may be cultivated. The LMR framework is commensurate with advances in cross-cultural academic research which have demonstrated moderating influences of cultural orientations on work habits, negotiating styles, cognitive processes, etc.

This paper transcends such previous works by invoking the individual as the unit of analysis and vocational perspective as an even stronger influence on these variables than culture alone. Regardless of culture, a universal dichotomy emerges, where persons involved in business are characterized primarily by linear-active modes of communication, and persons not involved in business typically employ less linear and more multi-active/hybrid modes of communication. Central to global strategy, are the linkages among individual characteristics, communication styles, work behaviors, and the extent to which the LMR constructs can predict leadership, negotiating styles, individual behaviors, among others.

Commensurate with exploring, expanding and energizing the field of international business, cross-cultural assessment tools equip academicians and practitioners with multi-cultural leadership tools for the 21st century. The universality of LMR correlations across cultures and within disciplines is both profound and poignant in a world where culture plays a central role in academic globalization and developing global business leaders.

REFERENCES

- [1] Bearden, W.O., Money, B.R. & Nevins, J.I. [2003]. Development and validation of a measure of long term orientation, In Money, B.R. and Rose, R.L. [Eds.] **Enhancing Knowledge Development in Marketing**, 14, Chicago, IL: American Marketing Association.
- [2] Bond, M.H. [2002]. Reclaiming the Individual From Hofstede's Ecological Analysis- A 20-Year Odyssey: Comment on Oyserman et al. [2002]. **Psychological Bulletin**, 128 [1], 73-77.

- [3] Fulbright, W.J. [1989]. **The Price of Empire**. Pantheon Books.
- [4] Gómez-Mejía, L.R., Balkin, D.B. & Cardy, R.L. [2004]. **Managing Human Resources**. [4th Ed.]. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- [5] **Gulliver**. [2000]. Richard Lewis Communications. PricewaterhouseCoopers.
- [6] Hall, E.T. [1973]. **The Silent Language**. Garden City, New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday.
- [7] Hill, C.W.L. [2003]. **International Business: Competing in the Global Marketplace**. [4th Ed.] Boston: McGraw-Hill/Irwin.
- [8] Holtgraves, T. [1997]. Styles of language use: Individual and cultural variability in conversational indirectness. **Journal of Personality and Social Psychology**, 73(3), 624-637.
- [9] Jackson, S.E. & Schuler, R.S. [2006]. **Managing Human Resources Through Strategic Partnerships**. Australia: Thomson/South-Western.
- [10] Lewis, R.D. [2000]. **When Cultures Collide: Managing Successfully Across Cultures**. London: Nicholas Brealey.
- [11] Lewis, R.D. [2003]. **The Cultural Imperative: Global Trends in the 21st Century**. Finland: Intercultural Press.
- [12] Mello, J.A. [2006]. **Strategic Human Resource Management**. [2nd Ed.]. Australia: Thomson/South-Western.
- [13] Oyserman, D., Coon, H.M. & Kemmelmeier, M. [2002]. Rethinking Individualism and Collectivism: Evaluation of Theoretical Assumptions and Meta-Analyses. **Psychological Bulletin**, 128(1), 3-72.
- [14] Thomas, K.W. & Kilmann, R.H. [1974]. **The Thomas-Kilmann Mode Instrument**. New York: NY: Xicom.
- [15] Tinsley, C. [1998]. Models of conflict resolution in Japanese, German, and American cultures. **Journal of Applied Psychology**, 83(2), 316-323.
- [16] Trompenaars, F. & Hampden-Turner, C. [1998]. **Riding the Waves of Culture: Understanding Cultural Diversity in Global Business**. [2nd Ed.] New York: McGraw-Hill.
- [17] Yamagishi & Yamagishi [1994]. Trust and commitment in the United States and Japan. **Motivation and Emotion**, 18(2), 129-66.