

# ACADEMIC GLOBALIZATION AND ICE: CROSS-CULTURAL RESEARCH AND TRANSNATIONAL EDUCATION

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

## ABSTRACT

As the Lion said to the Man, "There are many statues of men slaying lions, but if only the lions were sculptors there might be quite a different set of statues."

- Aesop

Commensurate with Aesop's message of the sculptor matters, so does the communicator, the language and surprisingly, business context.

The evolution from the experientially-based Cultureactive to the theoretically-based ICE, from first-generation to second-generation, this paper underscores the marriage of cross-cultural research and transnational education. Both Cultureactive and ICE serve at the pleasure of Globalization, and more importantly, Academic Globalization and Transnational Education. The impetus for this paper derives from two pivotal questions: Does one's professional lens create similarities more dominant than culture; and does English evoke responses significantly different from those of one's native language.

ICE emerged from Cultureactive when validity and reliability research issues became noteworthy. Known as the ABC research team, Adair, Buchan and Chen [1] & [2] capitalized upon both Hall's low context/high context communication tool and Triandis' model of subjective culture to result in the theoretical underpinnings for ICE. This conceptual reconfiguration is also

grounded in the works of Trompenaars, Holtgraves, Hampden-Turner, Thomas and Kilman, Yamagishi, and Bearden, Money and Nevins [3], [11], [20], [22] & [24]. ICE implementation strategies include the employment of Myers Briggs typologies.

The contribution of this paper is the celebration of the first year of ICE [InterCultural Edge], and its far-reaching ramifications. Previous research streams have underscored global similarities and differences among cultures, and a previous paper [23] established that cross-professional rather than cross-cultural differences are more paramount in assessing communication differences. This study employs Cultureactive and the LMR model, noting that business versus non-business context results in a more dominant impact on LMR profile than does nationality. Regardless of culture, persons involved in business are characterized primarily by linear-active modes of communication, and persons involved in non-business activities typically employ more multi-active/hybrid and less linear modes of communication. The pivotal question for academic globalization remains: Given ICE, are we in a better position to assess and predict leadership, negotiating styles, and communication behaviors, all of which are central to transnational education and cultivating global business leaders.

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

## TRANSNATIONAL EDUCATION

The explosion of the Internet has fueled learning in different time zones and business transactions across borders. Culture itself remains the final barrier. While immersed in a Great Britain Study Abroad Program [1999], the author discovered and purchased a fundamental,

cross-cultural learning tool and precursor to Cultureactive, called *Gulliver* [8]. Upon sharing this find with the Duke CIBER, Arie Lewin and Jeff Russell began collaborating with Richard Lewis Communications to initiate the evolution from Lewis' Cultureactive 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 globally to provide a broad research base in fulfillment of rigorous research standards for ICE validation.

### **LMR FRAMEWORK**

From his forty-plus years of cross-cultural consulting, Richard Lewis authored *When Cultures Collide* [14] and *The Cultural Imperative* [16], in an effort to explain national, international and transnational business cultures. Poignantly, he also conceived of the LMR [Linear-active, Multi-active, and Reactive] framework [15], which gave birth to Cultureactive, a cross-cultural assessment tool. The strength of this model, as is its successor's, ICE, is that it transcends previous works by focusing on the individual, rather than the nation-state as the unit of analysis. As such, there is no assumption of within-nation homogeneity.

### **LMR PROVENANCE: RICHARD LEWIS**

The provenance of Cultureactive and ICE is grounded in the LMR framework and briefly

chronicled here. The 1980s propelled an acute demand for cross-cultural instruction, and Richard Lewis, the consultant, was approached repeatedly by multi-national 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. In response to considerable criticism, he later added long-term versus short-term orientation. Edward Hall classified groups as monochronic or polychronic, high or low context and past- or future-oriented. The Kluckhohn-Strodtbeck [10] framework examined cultural differences along six dimensions: Control, Focus, Trust, Quantity versus Quality, Responsibility, Private versus Public (Activities largely conducted in private or public). Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner [22] identified seven fundamental dimensions of culture: Universalist versus Particularist, Individualist versus Collectivist, Neutral versus Emotional (Affective), Specific versus Diffuse, Achievement versus Ascription, Attitude regarding Time (Past versus future), Motion of Time (Monochronic versus Polychronic). The GLOBE research [13] cites differences among 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 challenging to translate when assessing the culture capital among employees.

A succinct, complete, and understandable categorization system was sought. Lewis

did not find that the previous models had met the practical criteria sought. 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 descriptive of character, 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 distinction or value.

Richard Lewis pondered whether employees are affective, ascriptive, neutral, particularist, or diffuse, and if so, how should they be managed? Thus, he proposed that cultures could be classified more comprehensively according to the three categories, comprising the LMR framework [14], [15] & [16].

#### **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 are not restricted to the use of time. A new dimension was the *reactive* category, characteristic of the behavior of most Asians, but overlooked by previous categorizations. The focus of the Lewis model is communication, which is often the impediment between and among cultures, and commensurately a key consideration in

transnational education and academic globalization.

## **CROSS-CULTURAL RESEARCH AND TRANSNATIONAL EDUCATION**

The contribution of this paper is the leap from Cultureactive to the dissemination of ICE, the next generation. Commensurate with exploring, expanding and energizing the field of transnational education, these cross-cultural assessment instruments are cross-cultural, cross-disciplinary and cross-epistemological as they equip academicians and practitioners with multi-cultural leadership and communication tools for the next generation of global leaders.

Earlier theoretical frameworks for studying cultural differences include Kluckhohn-Strodtbeck, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, and most notably, Hofstede [4], [10], [19] & [22]. More recently, the Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness group [GLOBE] [13] analyzed data for 18,000 managers in 62 countries. Like Hofstede, Trompenaars, Hampden-Turner and Kluckhohn-Strodtbeck, the GLOBE results also established cross-cultural differences among countries. While these important works are familiar to most, the Lewis model is less widely cited, perhaps because it is grounded in experience rather than research. However, this author argues that not only does the LMR framework transcend previous models by placing the individual, rather than the nation-state at center stage, its delivery through ICE rather than Cultureactive solidifies its theoretical and practical milestone.

Research consortia are finalizing the requisite validity and reliability measures for ICE, and commensurate ICE teaching consortia will soon develop a certified teaching network.

## UNIVERSALITY

The cross-continent implementation of Cultureactive initially elicited the following fundamental question: Whether one's business affinity or cultural mindset has a more dominant effect on individual LMR profiles and leadership/ communication/ cultural styles. The second salient question to emerge is whether *English* makes a difference. Are participants primed differently when they are surveyed in English vs. their native language? Cross-national studies propose to examine the following two variables and four conditions for cross-cultural similarities and differences:

		Business Context	
		Yes	No
Survey Language	English		
	Native Language		

Source: InterCultural Edge (ICE) Research Progress Report  
<http://faculty.fuqua.duke.edu/ciber/ice/about.html>. Accessed February 6, 2011

The above chart illustrates the fundamental question of whether one's business affinity or cultural mindset has a more direct effect on individual LMR profiles and leadership/communication/cultural styles. Moreover, survey language most likely impacts individual positioning along the LMR framework, but this remains to be substantiated. Capitalizing on the LMR framework, and focusing on Business

Context, samples were collected from multi-cultural sources: European Fulbright students, Sub-Saharan African entrepreneurs, Duke and Georgia State University MBA and undergraduate business students. It was demonstrated that business vs. non-business proclivity across cultures and disciplines, is a more powerful indicator of work habits, negotiating styles, cognitive processes, etc., than is cultural orientation. Regardless of national culture, persons with a predisposition for business were characterized primarily by linear-active modes of leadership/ communication/ cultural mindsets, and persons with a non-business tendency typically employed less linear-active and more hybrid or linear/multi-active modes of leadership/ communication/cultural mindsets.

## CONCLUSION

Having established the dominant within-professional similarities and few cross-cultural differences, the non-business model resulted in a different yet equally powerful leadership/communication/cultural framework. These distinct paradigms for business vs. non-business models are further substantiated by trends emerging in other works. Thus business or non-business predisposition has a more direct impact on one's individual cultural profile than does nationality, and yet both are important in a world where culture remains the final barrier.

The poignant questions posed in this paper are whether the universality of cross-cultural research and transnational education, as substantiated by the Cultureactive tool, are also corroborated by the now completed transition to ICE? What has the first year demonstrated? Will the evolving paradigms continue to be universal demonstrating within-professional similarities dominating cross-cultural differences? Moreover, does

Survey Language matter? Are leadership/communication/cultural frameworks different for participants primed in English versus their native language? Such answers remain to be established.

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 has transformed it into the theoretically-grounded InterCultural Edge (ICE). The ICE research project led by Duke University has invoked a more rigorous methodology, grounded in strong psychometric and theoretical properties, yielding a more powerful tool for practitioners and academicians.

This paper transcends previous works along four salient dimensions:

- 1] Invoking the individual as the unit of analysis;
- 2] Establishing that a professional mindset is a stronger influence on communication style than is culture alone;
- 3] Introducing the next-generation cross-cultural assessment tool, i.e. ICE.
- 4] Finally, can ICE catapult cross-cultural literacy to the next level of robustness?

In previous samples, business orientation played a major role in unifying groups across the globe in terms of underscoring a strong linear-active commonality amongst business professionals. The cross-disciplinary sample substantiated that both business and non-business orientations demonstrate profound distinctions.

With a more sophisticated, robust and rigorously-validated ICE tool, will the fundamental question of whether one's business affinity has a more direct effect

on individual LMR profiles and leadership/communication/cultural styles, remain?

Commensurate with discovering and disseminating the field of international business, cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary assessment tools equip academicians and practitioners for transnational education. The universality of LMR constructs across cultures and within disciplines is pivotal, profound and poignant. In the evolution of academic globalization, ICE is the sculptor that cultivates transnational education, culture capital and cultural literacy.

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