

Symposium/Forum

TITLE

One Size Does Not Fit All: Cross-Cultural Competence in Diverse Organizational Contexts

ABSTRACT

Cross-cultural competence (3C) is of increasing importance in corporate, governmental, and military sectors. Training, education, and assessment are the most commonly used methods for growing 3C within organizations. Employing these methods, however, require special consideration in different sectors as their appropriateness and utility are highly context dependent.

PRESS PARAGRAPH

Cross-cultural competence (3C) is of increasing importance in corporate, governmental, and military sectors. Training, education, and assessment are the most commonly used methods for growing 3C within organizations. Employing these methods, however, require special consideration in different sectors as their appropriateness and utility are highly context dependent. Assessment, training, and education of 3C all constitute complex processes in which contextual factors such as specific organizational needs, organizational preferences, and the value of initiatives must be considered. Dependent on sector, organizations conceptualize these factors differently, which makes a one size-fits-all approach to growing 3C a difficult proposition.

SUMMARY ABSTRACT

One Size Does Not Fit All: Cross-Cultural Competence in Diverse Organizational Contexts

Jessica A. Gallus^a, David Geller^b, Marinus van Driel^c

^aU.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences

^bGeorge Mason University

^cDefense Equal Opportunity Management Institute

As increasing numbers of organizations assume a global footprint, the necessity of developing employees' intercultural effectiveness, or cross-cultural competence (3C), becomes more apparent. From fostering relationships to tolerating ambiguity, the experience of living abroad provides exposure to different cultures. While much expatriate, Peace Corps, and study abroad literature highlights the individual characteristics that promote effective adaptation (Aycan, 1997; Caligiuri, 2000; Guthrie & Zektick, 1967), easily and successfully operating across cultures is no small feat. The knowledge, skills, and attributes of employees successful in American environments are oftentimes not those needed for success in other cultures (Hofstede, 2001).

Given the increasing need to grow employees who can interact effectively across cultures, the current symposium will focus on 3C training and development in a variety of industries from the commercial to government sectors. The wide focus of the symposium will allow the exploration of organizational and contextual idiosyncrasies that affect 3C initiatives such as training and selection. For instance, not all organizations have flexibility of selection, as is the case with the U.S. Armed Services, which require that all members of the general purpose force have some degree of 3C. Furthermore, not all organizations have the luxury of extended 3C training programs although employees need 3C to succeed.

While the research presented is directly applicable to practitioners interested in learning about various approaches and potential challenges to 3C training and development, the

theoretical underpinnings of the presented work may also be of value to academics. Presenters will discuss a range of related topics including 3C training and development interventions and challenges, the impact of cross-cultural training and immersion experiences on 3C development, and a review of specific 3C training and development efforts.

The first presenter, Caligiuri, highlights the importance of cultural agility to adapting across multicultural contexts. Caligiuri will discuss two primary interventions used by firms to help develop cultural agility: cross-cultural training and international assignments. Given the importance for organizations to justifying whether their training programs add value, Caligiuri will conclude with a discussion of assessments for intervention effectiveness following Kirkpatrick's four levels of learning evaluation. Recommendations for the assessment of intervention effectiveness will be discussed.

In his presentation, Mendenhall delineates the ambiguous nuances of the context that consultants often work when doing cross-cultural competence training and development. He links the constraints and opportunities in cross-cultural competence training to the context, and concludes his presentation by providing a model of how consultants can work with companies to develop a straightforward managerial development process that accounts for the inherent complexity within the cross-cultural competence development process.

The last two pieces focus on 3C efforts in the military. The first of these, by Geller, McCloskey, Papautsky, and Everett investigates the characteristics of immersion experiences as they influence U.S. Army Cadet cross-cultural competence development. The authors will discuss pre and post-test differences of 3C based on results from the Cultural Intelligence Scale, a cultural self-efficacy assessment, and a newly developed 3C self-report measure derived from experiences of Soldiers who had daily interactions with indigenous people during deployments.

The authors will also review the impact of experiential characteristics (e.g., amount of social interaction with foreign locals' events, lives and experiences) of deployment experiences on 3C development.

The last piece by Brittain and Gunther discusses the strengths and challenges of various 3C training interventions used in the Air Force. The Air Force Culture and Language Center (AFCLC) has found significant change in attitudes related to cross-cultural competence as a result of a 15-week educational intervention. However, the amount of change differs by instructor. AFCLC is currently researching which instructor variables contribute to these differences in order to 1) make recommendations to leadership about how instructor coaching influences (cross-cultural) attitude change in Airmen, and 2) provide a baseline by which we can compare the effectiveness of future 'instructorless' interventions.

The discussant, Dr. Raymond Noe, is a SIOP Fellow and one of the foremost academic authorities in the area of training and development. He is an author of three texts in human resource management, including *Employee Training and Development*, and has published extensively in such publications as the *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Academy of Management Review*, *Journal of Organizational Behavior* and *Personnel Psychology*. Dr. Noe is also a Contributing Editor for *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Associate Editor for *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, and Editorial Board member for *Personnel Psychology*. Dr. Noe will provide insights and recommendations regarding the presented research. This will be followed by a question and answer session; audience engagement with symposium presenters will be encouraged.

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Corporate interventions for training and developing cultural agility and approaches to intervention assessment

Paula Caligiuri, Rutgers University

Today, leaders and managers who work in global organizations must learn to be effective in multicultural or foreign situations. Global leaders, defined as executives who are in jobs with some international scope (cf. Spreitzer, McCall, & Mahoney, 1997), must effectively manage through the complex, changing, and often ambiguous global environment (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 2003). Global managers expand business into foreign markets, conceive strategies on a global basis, manage and motivate geographically dispersed and diverse teams and the like (e.g., Nardon & Steers, 2008; Bartlett & Ghoshal, 2003; Suutari, 2003). Effective global leaders and managers must learn to be **cultural agile** – as they adapt across multicultural contexts.

Cultural agility is a multi-faceted competence that enables people to work effectively in multicultural settings and with people from diverse cultures (Caligiuri, 2006; Caligiuri & Tarique, 2008). Culturally agile business professionals and leaders are able to operate with each of the following three cultural orientations, depending on the situational demands.

1. **Cultural adaptation:** Cultural adaptation is an orientation people may have to be sensitive and strive to adapt to the nuances of cultural differences, often leveraged in situations requiring business professionals to behave in the most culturally appropriate ways to be successful.
2. **Cultural minimalism:** Cultural minimalism is an orientation people have to reduce the perceived influence of cultural differences either in one's own behavior or in the behavior of others. Cultural minimalism is a highly functional cultural orientation in situations where important strategic reasons exist to override or play down cultural differences.

3. Cultural integration: Cultural integration is an orientation to understand cultural differences of each person in a multicultural or cross-cultural context, but strive to create something that is a combination of many cultural perspectives.

Training and Development Interventions

There are a variety of training and development interventions companies use to develop culturally agile professionals. Based on data from a large-scale SHRM foundation grant studying the practices of five global firms, this presentation will first describe the range of interventions using Mesiter and Willyerd's (2010) "social learning ecosystem" (see Figure 1 below).

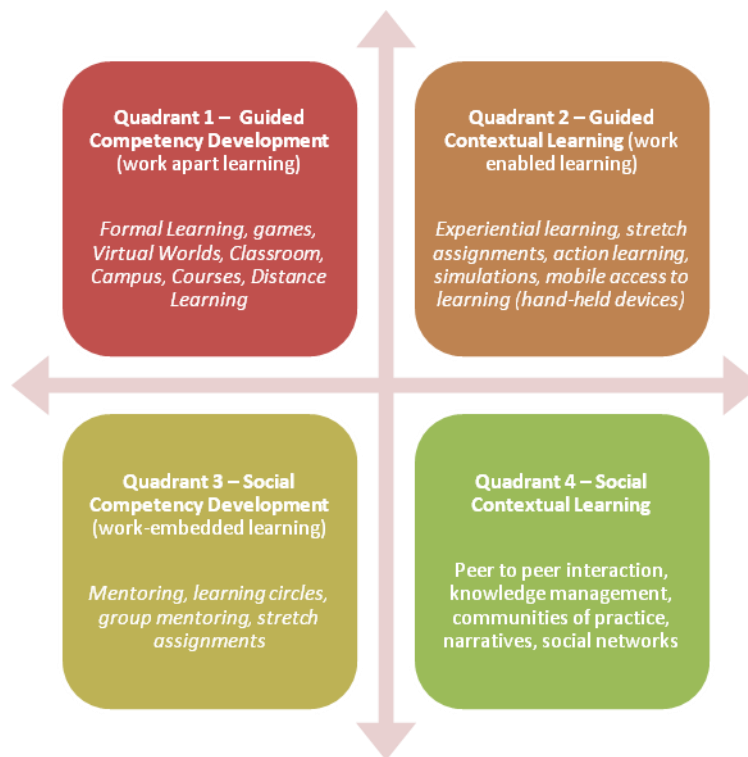


Figure 1: Meister and Willyerd's Social Learning Ecosystem

The presentation will then highlight two primary interventions used by firms to help develop cultural agility, cross-cultural training and international assignments. Cross-cultural training offers knowledge about the general dimensions on which most cultures differ and the influence of cultural differences on intercultural effectiveness is generally conveyed (e.g., House et al.,

2002; Hofstede, 2001) and provides the individual with awareness regarding the expected norms and behaviors in the new culture (Black & Mendenhall, 1990). Cultural agility can also be gained through immersion in foreign cultures, most often being long-term international assignments.

Assessment of Intervention Effectiveness

Assessing training and development intervention for effectiveness are important for all organizations needing to justify whether their programs add value. This presentation will follow Kirkpatrick's four levels of learning evaluation and offer examples of recommendations for assessment of intervention effectiveness. The first of the approaches to assessing the effectiveness is to assess **reactions** after cultural learning interventions and cross-cultural experiences. It is recommended that reactions to interventions with either a direct or indirect goal of increasing cultural agility be assessed. An example is pre and post assessment of cultural self-efficacy level setting (increase overly low efficacy, decrease overly high efficacy, or reinforce appropriate efficacy). The second is an **assessment of cultural knowledge**. There are elements of cultural knowledge that could be assessed before and after a cultural learning interventions or cross-cultural experience such as culture general knowledge (e.g., the ways in which cultures will vary). The third is an assessment of individual **effectiveness** in cross-cultural and multicultural situations. Given that culture is the context, assessing effectiveness would need to assess the facilitators of cultural agility, such as listening skills and perspective-taking. The fourth are the organizational-level results such as market share or successful negotiations.

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Context, constraints, and opportunities in developing cross-cultural competence in global leaders: A view from the firing line.

*Mark E. Mendenhall
University of Tennessee, Chattanooga*

The context of cross-cultural competence development in global leaders

Globalization has led to an increased need of global leadership competencies in managerial cadres – and even in lower level workers – for multinational firms. Many firms have isolated this as their most pressing human resource concern (Beechler, 2007; Mendenhall, Jensen, Gregersen, & Black, 2003). Reactions in the 1990s and the early years of the 21st century to this need internally on the part of firms have generally been conceptually haphazard, based on guesswork vs. research findings by program developers, and for the most part have been ineffective in producing desired training results (Von Glinow, 2001).

Since the 1990s, scholars working in the area of global leadership have made much progress in mapping the content domain of the cross-cultural competencies associated with global leadership effectiveness (Bird, Mendenhall, Stevens, & Oddou, in press), and in developing instruments that assess and provide feedback to managers regarding the degree to which they possess important cross-cultural competencies (Bird, 2008a). Though much progress has been made, it has been slow going in deploying this knowledge in powerful ways within organizations.

Many scholars working in the field hold that the development of cross-cultural competencies associated with global leadership in an individual: 1) is a non-linear, emergent process that occurs across time; 2) involves the cognitive and emotional integration of a multiplicity of “triggering” events from real-world experiences; 3) requires in training program design a high degree of experiential rigor and the existence of intensity factors that have been

shown to be associated with enhancing cross-cultural competence development (see Mendenhall, 2007; Oddou & Mendenhall, 2008; Paige, 1993).

It has been argued that the implications of the above analysis for enhancing cross-cultural competence include the following training approaches: real-time coaching, sophisticated simulations, learning-embedded field experiences, strategic business travel with imbedded developmental assignments, buffer-stripping on expatriate assignments, and global assessment centers (Oddou & Mendenhall, 2008).

Unfortunately, few of the above approaches fit with the types of training models that most organizations are using in their management development efforts. Firms need and want global leaders, yet the training methods they are comfortable with –both philosophically and institutionally — tend to produce the opposite results from what top management desires. Also, the mindset of top management tends to be the following: “We have an urgent need for skilled global leaders, but have limited time and budgets for their training. We have high, yet unclear expectations about training results (e.g., what skills we want people to leave the training with), but want you – the consultant – to figure that out for us and deliver that to us. All of this in a corporate context of conflicting agendas, internal politics, or inertia.” (Beechler, 2007) Thus, though the context provides consultants with new opportunities for training design, there is significant pressure to use old and familiar pedagogies due to client preferences.

Opportunities and constraints in delivering cross-cultural competence development programs

Bird (2008b) notes that the following constraints significantly impact the degree to which cross-cultural competence training is effective, and I will discuss each of these in detail during my presentation: 1) the lack of established selection criteria for admittance into the training program; 2) agreement between the consultant and the organization on what competencies to

assess and develop; 3) the option to design the program to tie to strategic goals; 4) buy-in from top management; 5) creating effective training for managers “who have no time” for training; and 6) retention of highly sought after program graduates.

This state of affairs generally produces the adoption of a “satisficing” approach between consultant and client organization – an approach that almost always does not produce the desired degree of cross-cultural competence development. I will discuss ways to turn the above six constraints into opportunities, and will discuss the opportunities and constraints consultants face when using custom vs. open enrollment models for global leadership training as well.

Where do we go from here?

I will conclude my presentation with the proposal of a model based on some of Jacobs (2005) ideas; my focus will be to delineate a “global leadership pipeline model” that: 1) integrates identification of talent via the use of rigorous assessment tools; 2) uses time as an ally instead of an enemy by having identified talent undergo a series of developmental experiences across time rather than trying to force feed competency development into a narrow time window; 3) utilizes forecasting processes for global leadership needs ; and 4) monitors, measures, and tracks development progress among training cadres. I will use case examples to illustrate the varying aspects of the model.

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Assessment of Experiential Characteristics that Influence U.S. Army Cadet Cross-Cultural Competence Development

David S. Geller^a, Mike McCloskey^b, Liza Lerner Papautsky^b, & Stacy Everett^a

^aGeorge Mason University

^b361 Interactive

As organizational endeavors continue to expand across geographical boundaries, cultural training and development programs increase in relevance and potential impact. Operations that span across these boundaries require culturally competent organizational members, and the military is no exception. However, when investigating the influence of intercultural experience on cross-cultural competence (3C) development, current research efforts tend to focus solely on length of time abroad (quantitative elements) rather than qualitative elements of the experience (e.g., Abbe, Geller, & Everett, 2009; Takeuchi, Tesluk, Seokhwa, & LePak, 2005).

The research at hand investigates the utility of immersion programs (e.g., study abroad, experiential expatriation) used by the U.S. Army to foster Cadet and Soldier 3C development with a focus on experiential characteristics. This presentation discusses 1) validation of a new measure of 3C tailored for Army missions, 2) properties of an assessment of the qualitative elements of intercultural experience, and 3) characteristics of the immersion experience that facilitate 3C development. Presented here are results from a pilot sample of 130 U.S. Army Cadets who completed pre- and post- immersion assessments. Final analyses will reflect a substantially larger sample.

For this effort, 3C development means an increase in pre- to post immersion scores on the Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS) (Earley & Ang, 2003), an intercultural efficacy scale (Abbe, Geller, & Everett, 2009), and a self-report measure of 3C (McCloskey, Behymer, Papautsky, Ross, & Abbe, in preparation). The self-report measure assesses Soldiers' general 3C and is unique from other 3C measures in that: 1) the competence components assessed were derived

from actual experiences of Soldiers who had daily interactions with local populaces during deployments, and 2) the content of the items is based on real-world deployment situations. A mixed-method approach was used to identify the components of operational 3C that predict effective performance in the field. Data used in scale creation were collected via critical incident elicitations from Soldiers and were compiled and analyzed to yield an extensive list of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and abilities that comprise general 3C. Data reduction techniques generated five hypothesized components of 3C: Cultural Maturity, Cognitive Flexibility, Cultural Knowledge, Cultural Acuity, and Interpersonal Skills. The items fully were informed by Soldier experiences to ensure content validity. A factor analysis, not yet conducted at the time of submission due to a small pilot sample size relative to the total number of items, is forthcoming.

Analysis of pilot data suggests convergent validity between the self-report measure and a 3C scenario-based measure at $r(105) = .54, p < .01$. Ongoing data collection efforts will provide peer and supervisor performance ratings which will allow an examination of measure criterion-related validity. Results will provide insight into concurrent validity of the self report measure and determine its utility to predict performance in intercultural settings.

Qualitative elements of intercultural experience, such as amount of interaction with foreign locals and level of immersion in cultural events/activities, were measured using Geller and Everett's (2010) assessment. Analyses of pilot sample experiential data using this measure suggest four principal components of intercultural experience, accounting for 61% of the total variance. Exploratory factor analyses support the same factors and report statistics satisfying Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin's (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity. Experiential factors were labeled social cultural immersion, interactive cultural immersion,

individual cultural immersion, non-social interaction, and social interaction. These factors were used to investigate experiential characteristics that related to 3C development.

Paired sample *t*-tests report significant 3C development ($p < .001$) for all CQS subscales (Earley & Ang, 2003), intercultural efficacy (Abbe, et al., 2009), cultural acuity, and interpersonal skill, and ($p < .05$) for cultural maturity (McCloskey, et al., in preparation). Intercultural self-efficacy development relates to non-social interaction ($p < .05$) and individual cultural immersion ($p < .05$). Also cultural maturity development relates to non-social interaction ($p < .05$), and cultural acuity development relates to social cultural immersion ($p < .001$). Further analyses of individual items assessing experiential characteristics (e.g., preparation for immersion) and items assessing situational characteristics (e.g., opportunity for feedback) will be presented.

Also, results of hypothesis testing based on Geller and Everett's (2010) propositions regarding an interaction between quantitative and qualitative elements of intercultural experience to predict 3C development, recently supported by Lough (in press), will be presented. At the time of submission, such analyses were not possible as the length of immersion for the pilot sample was homogenous (i.e., all participants were abroad for a similar amount of time). It is expected that data currently being collected, to be included in final analyses, will report significant variance in the length of immersion.

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Leveraging instructors as cultural mentors: Facilitating attitude change via distance learning

Melissa Brittain^a & Katie Gunther^b

^aAir Force Culture and Language Center

^bAuburn University

Organizations, both corporate and governmental, must make strategic decisions in the design and delivery of education and training to maximize effectiveness and reach, while minimizing cost. The mandate of the Air Force Culture and Language Center (AFCLC) is to develop cross-cultural competence (3C) in Airmen throughout their career professional development and deployment experiences (Dept. of the Air Force, 2009). As such, AFCLC has developed several education and training programs that seek to provide foundation knowledge in culture-general domains, develop positive attitudes toward cultural engagement, and give Airmen opportunities to apply cultural knowledge and skills prior to deploying to dynamic environments overseas (AFCLC, 2009).

Initial educational efforts at developing 3C began with an in-depth online course structured around student self-reflection, with systematic coaching and assessment by a cadre of highly experienced civilian instructors. Not surprisingly, this approach produced significant increases in cross-cultural declarative knowledge and attitudes. However, the feasibility of continuing with this approach has been called into question by senior leaders given its relative expense in light of the large target population (e.g. the general purpose force). The Air Force has reached a decision point related to this ambitious plan surrounding whether or not cross-cultural competence (consisting of knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes) can be developed via distance learning without the facilitation of instructors. This study directly contributes to a preliminary understanding of how and in what domains instructors make a difference to 3C development.

The first education program launched by AFCLC targeted the Air Force enlisted population. Enlisted personnel across the Air Force were afforded the opportunity to enroll in a free 3-credit social science elective offered via the Community College of the Air Force, *Introduction to Culture* (ITC). This 15-week course has been offered in an instructor-led distance learning format for three semesters beginning in the spring of 2009. To date the course has graduated roughly 300 students. Airmen were stratified across instructors by rank, gender, and duty location (out-of-continental United States, and within continental United States).

From the outset, instructors were considered essential to the second objective of the course, developing attitudes that would facilitate cross-cultural engagement. Consistent with extant literature in cross-cultural competence, attitudes amenable to intervention were theorized to be perspective-taking (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000), openness (Bateman, 2002), and cultural curiosity (Berlyne, 1960). In concert with ITC curriculum developers, the authors developed weekly assignments designed to elicit responses from the students in these domains. Instructors provided weekly attribute-targeted feedback to students, as well as documented judgments about students' attribute level on a behaviorally-anchored rating scale.

Among the programmatic analyses conducted with regard to student learning outcomes, we assessed whether instructors differed in their ability to influence attitude change. Data from the Spring 2010 term (N = 183) suggested that this was in fact the case. Difference scores calculated from pre- and post-course surveys in openness, motivation to learn about other cultures, and declarative knowledge (significantly greater than zero across the whole sample) were found to be different by instructor, as reported in Table 1. Differences in perspective-taking were significant from pretest to posttest, but did not differ by instructor.

In order to explore the differential effect of instructors, research in coaching and mentoring (Coll, Engel, & Bustos, 2009; Murphy, Mahoney, Chen, Mendoza-Diaz, & Yang, 2005), and distance learning pedagogy (Fulford & Zhang, 1993) suggests that the following instructor-level variables may influence student attitude change from pre-course to post-course: quality (e.g. timeliness of feedback, depth of feedback, length of feedback, level of interaction in the distance learning environment, student-provided instructor ratings), ability to model positive cross-cultural skills and attitudes (e.g. demonstrating or reinforcing perspective-taking, openness, and cultural curiosity in their feedback to students), and the degree to which they offered a rich repository of cultural resources to their students (preparing quality instructor notes, posting articles of interest). Currently, we are operationalizing these variables, coding the instructors' feedback to students, and pulling data directly from the Blackboard Learning System in order to study instructor effects. These variables will be used to explain change in student attitudes from pre- to postcourse using hierarchical linear modeling.

This study informs the design and delivery of culture educational interventions. It is incumbent on the educational institution to ensure that all students, regardless of instructor, benefit equally from a curricular intervention. Instructors can potentially be trained and calibrated to produce consistent (and potentially greater) change based on the results of this analysis. The results also provide a benchmark by which the success of future instructorless courses may be measured.

Table 1

Pre- and Post-course Means, Standard Deviations, Paired T-tests, and One-way ANOVAs for Attitudes that Influence Cross-cultural Competence

	Pre-Course
	<i>Mean</i>
1. Perspective-taking	3.71
2. Curiosity	4.31
3. Openness to Experience ^a	3.32
4. Motivation to Learn ^a	3.59
5. Cognitive Empathy	3.88
6. Intercultural Self-Efficacy	2.25
7. Gain in Declarative Knowledge ^a	0.42

Note. All means were on a 5-point scale, with the exception of Declarative Knowledge, which reflects percent change from pretest

to posttest. ^a Change in attribute from pre- to post-course differed significantly by instructor at $\alpha=.10$ -- Openness: $F(9,148) =$

1.697; Motivation to Learn: $F(9, 152) = 2.080$; Gain in Declarative Knowledge: $F(9, 156) = 19.530$.

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