Defining the content domain of intercultural competence for global leaders

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Abstract

Purpose – Research on expatriation and global leadership has been characterized by wide variations in defining what constitutes intercultural competence. Greater progress can be achieved if a comprehensive definition of the intercultural competence domain can be established, particularly with regard to the specific context of global leadership. This paper aims to focus on the issues.

Design/methodology/approach – The authors conduct an extensive review of the global leadership and expatriation literatures, integrating and synthesizing prior theoretical and empirical efforts to develop a comprehensive domain definition for intercultural competence in the context of global leadership.

Findings – The domain of intercultural competence in the context of global leadership comprised three dimensions – perception management, relationship management and self management. Each dimension is characterized by facets that further delineate aspects of intercultural competence.

Research limitations/implications – The domain definition of intercultural competence for global leadership appears to be well supported in prior theoretical and empirical work focusing on expatriation and global leadership; however that work was fragmented in nature. A test of the comprehensive model, i.e. all three dimensions and 17 facets, is called for, as well as the validation of an instrument that measures them.

Originality/value – The paper integrates and synthesizes the extensive body of theoretical and empirical work related to intercultural competence and clearly establishes the content domain, thereby enhancing the efficacy of future theoretical and empirical efforts.

Keywords Leadership, Human resource management, Multinational companies, Cross-cultural management

Paper type Conceptual paper

Intercultural competence is increasingly necessary in today's global workplace as collaborative and coordinating demands increasingly stretch leaders' capacities to perceive, interpret and act in ways that achieve organizational goals. Since the early

1990s, an increasing number of scholars have been studying effective global leaders and attempting to delineate the competencies that are critical to their success. Reviews of this literature (Bird and Osland, 2004; Jokinen, 2005; Mendenhall, 2001; Mendenhall and Osland, 2002a, b; Osland, 2008; Osland *et al.*, n.d., in press) find that social scientists have delineated over fifty competencies that influence global leadership effectiveness; however, many of these competencies overlap conceptually and are often separated only by semantic differences (Jokinen, 2005; Osland, 2008).

Greater clarity can be brought to the study of global leadership by delineating the specific content domain of constructs identified as essential to it. Progress in delineating the relationship of intercultural competence to global leadership effectiveness and performance is presently hampered due to varying conceptualizations of the content domain of intercultural competence, particularly with regard to the context of global leadership. In this paper, we will review the empirical findings from the global leadership and expatriation literatures related to intercultural competence and present a comprehensive formulation of intercultural competence.

Defining intercultural competence and global leadership

Perhaps because it has been widely addressed across a range of disciplines – from psychology to international management to education, to name a few – intercultural competency has been broadly defined as the ability to function effectively in another culture (see Dinges and Baldwin, 1996; Gertsen, 1990). As Deardorff (2004) notes, there is widespread disparity in delineating what specifically comprises intercultural competence. In their review of literature, Chen and Starosta (1996) point out that it is often described as involving affective, cognitive and behavioral perspectives. Leiba-O'Sullivan (1999) further distinguishes between stable and dynamic competencies, noting that the former are stable and enduring, while the latter are more susceptible to development through training. Dynamic competencies are also highly context- and task-dependent. Within this paper we retain the broad definition and define the relevant content domain in terms of stable competencies, which are also often defined in terms of personality traits or predispositions.

The definition of global leadership is similarly challenging. As both Jokinen (2005) and Osland (2008) point out in their review of global leadership research, distinctions between domestic and global leadership and between global managers and global leaders consistently emerge as central issues. Osland (2008) suggests, and we adopt, a definition of global leadership as "the process of influencing the thinking, attitudes, and behaviors of a global community to work together synergistically toward a common vision and common goal". This definition applies not only to individuals in clearly identifiable leadership positions, but to anyone whose effective role involves this process.

A review of the global leadership and expatriation literatures

Mendenhall and Osland (2002a, b) categorized the global leadership literature as exhibiting six core dimensions of competencies, with numerous facets within each dimension (see Table I).

When they subsequently compared the dimensions of global leadership and attendant competencies to the literature of expatriate effectiveness, they found

| Intercultural competencies | | | Global business competencies | | |
| Cross-cultural relationship skills | Person/group level | | Global business expertise | Macro level | |
	Traits and values	Cognitive orientation		Global organizing expertise	Visioning
Building relationships	Inquisitiveness and curiosity	Environmental scanning	Global business savvy	Team building	Articulating a tangible vision and strategy
Cross-cultural communication skills	Continual learner	Global mindset	Global organizational savvy	Continuity building	Envisioning
Ability to emotionally connect	Accountability	Thinking agility	Business acumen	Organizational networking	Entrepreneurial spirit
Inspire, motivate others	Integrity	Improvisation	Stakeholder orientation	Creating learning systems	Catalyst for cultural change
Conflict management	Courage	Pattern recognition	External orientation	Architecting and designing	Catalyst for strategic change
Negotiation expertise	Commitment	Cognitive complexity	Results-orientation	Global networking	
Empowering others	Hardiness	Cosmopolitanism		Strong customer orientation	
Managing cross-cultural ethical issues	Maturity	Managing uncertainty		Business literacy	
Social literacy	Results-orientation	Local vs global paradoxes		Change agentry	
Cultural literacy	Personal literacy	Behavioral flexibility			
	Tenacity				
	Emotional intelligence				

Source: Adapted from Mendenhall and Osland (2002b)

Table I.
The terrain of global leadership constructs

significant overlap between three of the competency domains of global leadership that relate specifically to intercultural effectiveness and competencies that are important to living and working in a foreign country as an expatriate (Jokinen, 2005; Mendenhall, 2001; Mendenhall and Osland, 2002a, b; Osland *et al.*, 2006; Osland, 2008). The six dimensions can be conceptually divided between those that involve competencies directly related to intercultural interaction at the person and small group level (which are critical to expatriate effectiveness and global leadership), and those that involve the mastery of more macro, global business knowledge and skills. All the reviews agree that a major dimension of global leadership involves the mastery of intercultural competencies (Jokinen, 2005; Mendenhall, 2001; Mendenhall and Osland, 2002a, b; Osland *et al.*, 2006; Osland, 2008). However, none of the reviews to date are able to definitively delineate which intercultural competencies form the nomological net in terms of their valence and cogence to manifestations of effective global leadership.

Review of the expatriation literature
Because the reviews of global leadership competencies clearly indicated a strong overlap with the expatriate adjustment competency domain when it comes to intercultural effectiveness, we analyzed reviews of the empirical expatriate adjustment literature since 1984 (Arthur and Bennett, 1995; Bhaskar-Shrinivas *et al.*, 2005; Dinges and Baldwin, 1996; Gertsen, 1990; Harrison *et al.*, 2004; Hechanova *et al.*, 2003; Jordan and Cartwright, 1998; Kealey, 1996; Mendenhall *et al.*, 2002; Mendenhall and Oddou, 1985; Mol *et al.*, 2005; Oddou and Mendenhall, 1984; Ones and Viswesvaran, 1997; Ronen, 1989; Stahl, 2001; Thomas, 1998; Thomas and Lazarova, 2006) to evaluate their assessment of the state of the field. Additionally, we have included empirical studies that were not included in the aforementioned reviews or that were published after the appearance of these reviews. To assess the empirical literature of the global leadership field, we analyzed the most prominent reviews of that literature to date (Jokinen, 2005; Mendenhall, 2001; Mendenhall and Osland, 2002a, b; Osland, 2008; Osland *et al.*, n.d.).

Expatriate adjustment competencies
The ability to adjust to the work, social, and general cultural dimensions of a new culture has been shown to influence subsequent productivity in an overseas assignment (Kraimer *et al.*, 2001; Harrison and Shaffer, 2005). Successful expatriate adjustment predicts task completion and relationship building effectiveness during the overseas assignment (Harrison and Shaffer, 2005), thus an understanding of what competencies influence expatriate adjustment is critical to an understanding of enhancing individual performance in the global workplace.

Mendenhall and Oddou (1985) undertook a review and categorization of competencies associated with expatriate adjustment. They found that factors influencing expatriate adjustment could be grouped into one of three categories: the self-oriented dimension, the others-oriented dimension, and the perceptual dimension.

The self-oriented dimension includes "activities and attributes that serve to strengthen the expatriate's self-esteem, self-confidence, and mental hygiene" Mendenhall and Oddou (1985, pp. 40, 41, 42). The others-oriented dimension includes "activities and attributes that enhance the expatriate's ability to interact effectively with host-nationals", while the perceptual dimension contains cognitive processes that facilitate an expatriate's "ability to understand why foreigners behave

the way they do", thus enhancing their "ability to make correct attributions about the reasons or causes of host-nationals' behavior").

This categorization has been), in part, the basis for the most rigorously tested, influential and robust model of expatriate adjustment in the field, the international adjustment model (IA). The IA model was developed by Black *et al.* (1991) and comprehensive reviews and empirical validation of this model have been conducted by Bhaskar-Shrinivas *et al.* (2005), Hechanova *et al.* (2003) Mendenhall *et al.* (2002) and Shaffer *et al.* (1999).

In the IA model Mendenhall and Oddou's (1985) earlier categories were renamed: self-orientation became self-efficacy, reflecting the degree to which an individual believes he or she has the ability to succeed in new tasks and settings (Bandura, 1977); others-oriented and perceptual, were respectively renamed relational and perceptual.

These three dimensions constituted the Individual dimension of the IA model, which focused on traits and competencies that had been shown in the literature to positively influence heightened levels of success in interacting with people from other cultures in overseas or cross-culturally significant settings. The Individual dimension constituted one of four dimensions of direct determinants of expatriate adjustment (the others were job, organizational, and nonwork).

A comprehensive meta-analysis of the IA model by Bhaskar-Shrinivas *et al.* (2005) of over 50 determinants of expatriate adjustment using data from 8,474 expatriates in 66 studies emphasized the "centrality, criticality, and complexity of adjustment, strongly supporting Black *et al.*'s (1991, pp. 257, 272) model." They also concluded that the "meta-analytic findings attest to the importance of some individual factors – overall self-efficacy and relational skills – in predicting expatriate adjustment. The variance explained by the latter exceeded that explained by other predictors by 30 percent".

To summarize, empirical evidence suggests that the content domain of intercultural competence can be usefully organized using three broad dimensions for individuals: the cognitive/perceptual, other/relationship, and self/self-efficacy domains (Bhaskar-Shrinivas *et al.*, 2005; Mendenhall and Oddou, 1985; Black *et al.*, 1991; Thomas, 1998, p. 247). For clarity purposes, these three dimensions have been re-titled the Perception Management, Relationship Management, and Self Management factors.

These three major intercultural competency factors will be reviewed below, along with their dimensions; a brief discussion of the empirical support for each dimension is included as well. It is important to note that based on the global leadership/expatriate adjustment literatures, there are many competencies that can be classified within one of the three aforementioned competency factors. Based on the reviews of the literature we conducted we determined that seventeen intercultural competency dimensions most prominently emerged in terms of:

- consistency of appearance in empirical studies in the literature;
- influence on interpersonal processes important to global leadership as reported in the expatriate and global leadership literatures; and
- generative impact, i.e. influence the impact, development or acquisition of dynamic competencies.

There is a strong need in this nascent field for parsimony of content domain; that is, an enormous list of competencies is unwieldy, and does not assist either social scientists or practitioners to advance the field effectively. Our desire is that this three factor

framework of 17 intercultural competency dimensions can serve as a starting point for scholars and practitioners working in this area to build from, with the anticipated outcome of a future understanding of global leadership competencies that is more nuanced, refined, and complex in nature. Currently, however, the vast number of intercultural competencies that can serve as candidates for being important to global leadership leave scholars in the field working haphazardly; for the field to progress in a more refined understanding of its phenomenon, a parsimonious framework is needed.

Perception management

Perception management addresses how people cognitively approach cultural differences. It assesses people's mental flexibility when confronted with cultural differences, their tendency to make rapid judgments about those differences, their ability to manage their perceptions when confronted with situations that differ from what they expect, and finally, it also assesses people's innate interest in, and curiosity about, other cultures. This factor comprised five facets.

Nonjudgmentalness refers to the extent to which one is inclined to withhold or suspend judgment about persons or situations or behaviors that are new or unfamiliar. In both the global leadership and expatriate literatures this facet relates to intercultural effectiveness (Hudson and Inkson, 2006; McCall and Hollenbeck, 2002; Moro Bueno and Tubbs, 2004).

Inquisitiveness reflects openness towards, and an active pursuit of understanding, ideas, values, norms, situations, and behaviors that are new and different. It involves the willingness to seek to understand the underlying reasons for cultural differences and to avoid stereotyping people from other cultures. It also includes one's capacity to actively take advantage of opportunities for growth and learning. Tucker *et al.* (2004, p. 230) conceptualize it as "the capability to accept new ideas and see more than one's own way of approaching and solving problems".

This dimension also emerged in reviews of the global leadership literature (Bird and Osland, 2004; Jokinen, 2005; Osland, 2008) and has also found support in work by Kealey and his associates (Kealey, 1996; Kealey and Ruben, 1989) and others in the expatriate literature (Arthur and Bennett, 1997; Black and Gregersen, 1991; Hudson and Inkson, 2006; Mol *et al.*, 2005). Black *et al.* (1999) found that inquisitiveness was the most important factor within the constellation of competencies identified in their study.

Tolerance of ambiguity refers to the ability to manage uncertainty in new and complex situations where there is not necessarily a "right" way to interpret things. People may be open to new ideas and experiences, but not necessarily manage the ambiguity and uncertainty associated with them.

Tolerance of ambiguity has commonly been found to be an important competency contributing to intercultural effectiveness in both the global leadership (Jokinen, 2005; Mendenhall and Osland, 2002a, b) and expatriate literatures (Arthur and Bennett, 1995, 1997; Cui and Awa, 1992; Hermann *et al.*, 2008).

For example, Black *et al.* (1999) found that the ability to not only manage uncertainty – but to embrace it and find it challenging and motivating, is an important competency of global leaders. Ruben and Kealey (1979) found that tolerance for ambiguity acts as an important contributor to the ability to communicate well with people from other cultures, indicating that this competency combines with relationship management competencies to enhance overall intercultural effectiveness.

Cosmopolitanism refers to a natural interest in and curiosity about different countries and cultures, as well as the degree of interest in world and international events. To be effective in a global or cross-cultural milieu, it is necessary to have a perspective of time and space that extends beyond one's local setting (Kedia and Mukherji, 1999; Flango and Brumbaugh, 1974; Goldberg, 1976). This is an important orientation for global leaders to possess and emerged in reviews of the literature on effective global leadership competencies (Bird and Osland, 2004; Mendenhall and Osland, 2002; Osland *et al.*, 2006).

Our conceptualization of cosmopolitanism reflects that of Levy *et al.* (2007, p. 240) who argue that cosmopolitanism "represents a state of mind that is manifested as an orientation toward the outside, the Other [. . .] a willingness to explore and learn from alternative systems of meaning held by others".

Category inclusiveness refers to the tendency to cognitively include and accept things (including people) based on commonalities rather than dividing things into groups or categories (even though noticeable categories for differentiating things or people may exist. Detweiler (1975, 1978, 1980) identified category width as a construct that captures the tendency of people to apply cognitive categories more loosely. He found empirical support for the thesis that people with broader categories (i.e. people who define categories to be more inclusive) will be similarly more inclusive when it comes to people who are perceived to be culturally different. Category Inclusiveness represents a refinement of the construct label by denoting how individuals use their categorizing activities – to include rather than exclude.

Relationship management
Relationship management addresses people's orientation toward the importance of relationships in general; how aware they are of others and their interaction styles, values, etc., and the level of awareness they have of themselves and their impact on others. This factor complements the Perception Management factor in that it focuses on how mental structures shape behaviors, especially with respect to the development and management of intercultural, interpersonal relationships.

It should be noted that relationships also provide a source of information to help people understand other cultures as well as serve as a source of social support. The development of positive relationships is a critical aspect of effective intercultural job performance (Harrison and Shaffer, 2005; Mol *et al.*, 2005). Five dimensions comprised this factor.

Relationship interest refers to the extent to which people exhibit interest in, and awareness of, their social environment. People may be high in relationship interest, yet nevertheless still lack the actual ability to develop effective relationships with those in whom they are interested.

In the literature this intercultural competency is often bundled together conceptually with other skills into broader conceptualizations of interpersonal skills; for example, Shaffer *et al.* (2006, p. 113) conceptualize their people orientation variable as encompassing "a desire to understand and relate to HCNs [what we term, Relationship Interest] and to develop close relationships with them [what we term Interpersonal Engagement]". In their meta-analytic review of the expatriate performance literature, Mol *et al.* (2005) found that the factor, interpersonal interest emerged as a solid predictor of expatriate job performance.

This facet of the Relationship management factor has been noted in both the expatriate literature (Arthur and Bennett, 1997; Kühlmann and Stahl, 1996; Sinangil and Ones, 1997) and in the global leadership literature (Mendenhall and Osland, 2002a, b).

Interpersonal engagement refers to the degree to which people have a desire and willingness to initiate and maintain relationships with people from other cultures. Different terms have been used to denote this facet, including: people orientation (Shaffer *et al.*, 2006) interaction management (Ruben and Kealey, 1979), relationship building (Kealey, 1996), outgoingness or extraversion (Arthur and Bennett, 1995; Ronen, 1989), relational abilities (Jordan and Cartwright, 1998; Thomas, 1998), sociability and interest in other people (Kealey and Ruben, 1983; Stahl, 2001), interpersonal skills (Hechanova *et al.*, 2003) and intercultural competence (Dinges and Baldwin, 1996). Global leadership literature reviews similarly note that this is an important competency for effective intercultural interaction (Jokinen, 2005; Mendenhall and Osland, 2002).

Emotional sensitivity refers to the extent to which people have an awareness of, and sensitivity to, the emotions and feelings of others. Emotional sensitivity is akin to the Big Five personality factor of agreeableness, which refers to a prosocial and communal orientation towards others without antagonism (John and Srivastava, 1999; Shaffer *et al.*, 2006) and displaying courtesy and tact, empathy, kindness, and respect (Ones and Viswesvaran, 1997; Shaffer *et al.*, 2006). Mol *et al.* (2005) found in their meta-analysis of the expatriate literature that Agreeableness is a predictor of expatriate job performance. Similarly, Shaffer *et al.*(2006) found it to be a key predictor of interaction adjustment.

Research in both the global leadership and expatriate literatures has found that emotional sensitivity is critical to intercultural effectiveness as it contributes to an individual's ability to: show appropriate respect to others (Jordan and Cartwright, 1998; Moro Bueno and Tubbs, 2004), display both interpersonal and cultural empathy (Cui and Van den Berg, 1991; Martin and Hammer, 1989), and show tolerance for differences in others (Hudson and Inkson, 2006; Selmer, 2001).

Self-awareness refers to the degree to which people are aware of:

- their strengths and weaknesses in interpersonal skills;
- their own philosophies and values;
- how past experiences have helped shape them into who they are as a person; and
- the impact their values and behavior have on relationships with others.

High self-awareness provides a foundation for strategically acquiring new competencies and skills, whereas low self-awareness promotes self-deception and arrogance.

Jokinen (2005) categorizes this dimension as being one of the primary intercultural competencies fundamental to effective global leadership. Similarly, Varner and Palmer (2005, p. 1) argue from a theoretical standpoint that "conscious cultural self-knowledge is a crucial variable in adapting to other cultures". Goldsmith *et al.* (2003) include self-awareness as an important competency in the personal mastery component of their global leadership model. Wills and Barnham (1994) found that emotional self-awareness was an important predictor of intercultural effectiveness, and Chen (1987) found that it related to intercultural communication competence. Similarly, Bird

and Osland (2004) concluded that one of the byproducts of the competency of self-awareness, a sense of humility, is an important competency for successful intercultural interaction.

Social flexibility refers to the extent to which individuals present themselves to others in order to create favorable impressions and to facilitate relationship building. Kealey (1996, p. 86) refers to this as "the ability to modify ideas and behavior, to compromise, and to be receptive to new ways of doing things". This is commonly manifested in both the global leadership research literature (Mendenhall and Osland, 2002a, b) and the expatriate research literature as being important to intercultural effectiveness (Kühlmann and Stahl, 1996, 1998; Martin and Hammer, 1989; Ward, 1996).

Scholars have operationalized social flexibility in a variety of ways. One approach is via the constructs of self-monitoring or impression management. Mendenhall and Wiley (1994) hypothesized a relationship between impression management and expatriate adjustment, and Montagliani (1996) found that it significantly correlated with cultural adjustment scores, suggesting that individuals who use behavioral cues in the social environments of new cultures will increase their potential to enhance their ability to adjust and be effective in those new cultures. Similarly, in their metanalysis of the expatriate literature, Hechanova *et al.* (2003) reported that Caligiuri (1995) found that self-monitoring correlated with general expatriate adjustment and Harrison, Chadwick, and Scales (1996) found it was associated with interactional adjustment on the part of expatriates.

Self-management

The self-management factor takes into account people's strength of identity and their ability to effectively manage their emotions and stress. To be successful in intercultural situations, it is critical that people have a clear sense of themselves and a clear understanding of their fundamental values. To be effective in a global context, people must be able to understand, change and adapt appropriately to the foreign work and intercultural environment, yet at the same time, they must also have a stable sense of self in order to remain mentally and emotionally healthy. Seven competency scales comprise this factor. Of the seven dimensions, three relate to sense of self and four relate to managing emotions and stress.

Optimism refers to the extent to which people maintain a positive, buoyant outlook toward other people, events, situations and outcomes. Optimism and its derivative benefits are found both in the global leadership and expatriate literatures (Caligiuri, 2004; Gertsen, 1990; Kühlmann and Stahl, 1996; McCall and Hollenbeck, 2002).

Caligiuri (2004), in a study of 256 global leaders, found that they were significantly higher in the realm of "conscientiousness" and significantly lower on the dimension of "neuroticism" in terms of their Big Five personality scores than less effective global leaders. Some of the lexical markers of Conscientiousness are being purposeful, strong-willed, and determined (Ones and Viswesvaran, 1997), all manifestations of optimism.

Self-confidence refers to the degree to which people have confidence in themselves and have a tendency to take action to overcome obstacles and master challenges. Although people may be optimistic regarding cross-cultural situations, they may nevertheless lack the self-confidence to act positively on their optimism.

Self-confidence was noted by Kealey (1996, p. 84) in his review as being an important competency "that is needed to be successful in another culture". Similarly,

other scholars have found self-confidence or self-efficacy to be important variables in intercultural effectiveness and adjustment (Arthur and Bennett, 1995, 1997; Bhaskar-Shrinivas *et al.*, 2005; Gertsen, 1990; Goldsmith *et al.*, 2003; Harrison *et al.*, 2004; Hechanova *et al.*, 2003; Jordan and Cartwright, 1998; Shaffer *et al.*, 1999; Smith, 1966). In their meta-analyses of the expatriate adjustment literature, Bhaskar-Shrinivas *et al.* (2005) and Hechanova *et al.* (2003) found that self-efficacy was a significant predictor of expatriate adjustment.

Self-confidence relates to the Big Five personality dimension of extraversion, which, among other things, reflects an energetic approach toward the social and material world, sociability, and positive emotionality (John and Srivastava, 1999). Extraversion has been shown to empirically predict expatriate performance (Mol *et al.*, 2005)

Self-identity refers to the extent to which people maintain personal values independent of situational factors and have a strong sense of personal identity. A strong self-identity allows people to integrate their new cultural knowledge into existing mental models, whereas those low in self-identity are either unable to integrate new knowledge, or when they do, they experience life crises that overwhelm them.

Self-identity is akin to the construct of independent self-construal (Markus and Kitayama, 1991, p. 226), which involves "construing oneself as an individual whose behavior is organized and made meaningful primarily by reference to one's own internal repertoire of thoughts, feelings, and actions rather than by reference to thoughts, feelings, and actions of others". Research findings suggest that expatriates with independent self-construals have higher levels of psychological adjustment overseas than expatriates with interdependent self-construals (Oguri and Gudykunst, 2002; Pi-Ju Yang *et al.*, 2006; Yamaguchi and Wiseman, 2001)

Emotional resilience refers to the extent to which a person has emotional strength and resilience to cope with challenging cross-cultural situations. Emotional resilience reflects the psychological hardiness that allows a global manager to carry on through difficult challenges. Individuals who can manage and control their emotions are also better equipped to deploy other global competencies than those who are low in emotional resilience.

This dimension emerged in Mendenhall and Osland's (2002a, b) review of the global leadership literature, where they labeled it "hardiness". It similarly emerged from the ION review of global competencies (Bird and Osland, 2004). Emotional resilience is a common indicator of intercultural effectiveness in the expatriate literature as well (Arthur and Bennett, 1995, 1997; Caligiuri, 2000; Kealey, 1996).

Non-stress tendency refers to the scope of the dysfunctional stressors that may influence people in their daily work and social life in intercultural situations. The greater the tendency people have to experience stress, the more likely it is that they will find it difficult to deploy their inercultural competencies in an effective way. Shaffer *et al.* (2006, p. 112) label this emotional stability and define it as "the tendency to experience positive emotional states and to respond calmly to stressful events". Kealey (1996, p. 86) refers to this competency as "the ability to be calm and steadfast despite opposition, difficulties, or adversity [. . .] Learning to be patient is critical for success". Sometimes referred to as patience in the literature, it has been shown to be a critical element of intercultural effectiveness (Gertsen, 1990; Kealey, 1994, 1996).

Responding to events naturally, with a calm, consistent bearing (Arthur and Bennett, 1995, 1997; Mischel, 1965; Smith, 1966) or not being "easily worried [or]

nervous" (Mol *et al.*, 2005, p. 612) is an important competency in living and working in cross-cultural settings. In their meta-analysis of 30 primary empirical studies in the expatriate literature on predictors of expatriate job performance, Mol and associates found that an orientation toward neuroticism was antithetical to performance in cross-cultural settings.

Stress management refers to the degree to which individuals actively utilize stress reduction techniques in their personal lives and are willing to use new techniques in the future. People who consistently use stress reduction techniques are better able to manage or enhance their emotional resilience and innate tendency to be unaffected by typical stressors and gain energy to deploy other global competencies effectively.

Empirical evidence on the relationship of stress to expatriate adjustment provides strong support for the importance of this facet (Coyle, 1988; Feldman and Tompson, 1993; Redmond and Bunyi, 1991; Searle and Ward, 1990).

Interest flexibility refers to the willingness to substitute important personal interests from one's own background and culture with similar, yet different interests in the host culture. The ability to find new interests and activities to replace existing ones that do not fit within the new culture is important in being successful in global or intercultural settings (Brein and David, 1973; David, 1976; Mumford, 1975).

Recent research on this variable has supported the concept of interest flexibility as a positive influence on expatriate adjustment. Zimmerman *et al.* (2003, p. 58) found that German expatriates in the People's Republic of China had higher levels of adjustment if they were able to adjust their habits to fit what was available in the host culture. Regarding leisure activities, they concluded that "the principal mode of adjusting to the perceived lack of leisure possibilities was to change their habits [. . .] [such as changing] their sports, such as giving up mountain-biking for playing squash".

Discussion

Social scientists and practitioners working in the field of global leadership suffer from the lack of a common agreement regarding the domain of intercultural competencies that influence global leadership effectiveness. Working without such a framework exacerbates tendencies toward atheoretical, survey-oriented, conceptual mapping studies that often reproduce similar findings but couch them in new terminology. Such efforts are not entirely unproductive, however enough of these studies now exist in the field to warrant an integration of their findings into a working framework from which more refined empirical and theoretical research should ensue.

The primary contribution of this paper is the delineation of the content domain of intercultural competence as it applies to the phenomenon of global leadership. A comprehensive review of the empirical literatures of global leadership and the closely related area of expatriate adjustment suggests that three broad factors that constitute intercultural competence in this particular context exist. The three factors that emerged are consistent with both the theoretical (Mendenhall and Oddou, 1985; Black *et al.*, 1991) and empirical literatures (Bhaskar-Shrinivas *et al.*, 2005; Hechanova *et al.*, 2003; Mendenhall *et al.*, 2002; Shaffer *et al.*, 1999) and at the same time extend the field through the identification and categorization of dimensions for each faactor.

We propose that these three factors – perception management, relationship management and self management – comprised 17 dimensions that have been shown to consistently emerge from the extant empirical literature (five each for perception

management and relationship management and seven for self management). We reiterate that whether more competencies should be added to these dimensions is an empirical question for the field. The value of the framework provided in this paper is not as a final categorization of intercultural competencies associated with global leadership, but rather as a foundation upon which scholars can build a more sophisticated, nuanced understanding of intercultural competencies associated with global leadership and their interrelationships.

Caution is warranted regarding the proposed framework, as no published empirical investigations have as yet examined the full set of dimensions embodied in this presentation of the intercultural competence construct. A test of the comprehensive framework, i.e. all three factors and 17 dimensions is called for, as well as the validation of an instrument that measures them. In this vein, of particular interest would be the examination of the internal consistency of the dimensions for each factor as well as the a more rigorous understanding of the nomological net of intercultural competence, including its antecedents and its impact on global leadership effectiveness, especially as that influences key organizational outcomes.

A preliminary empirical investigation of the overall framework has yielded promising findings that suggest the framework has rich potential. In a study of Japanese expatriate managers, Furuya and associates (Furuya *et al.*, 2009) found the framework had predictive value with regard to several positive outcomes related to global leadership. Specifically, they found that intercultural competency as defined and measured using this framework positively influenced several global leadership-related variables, including global business acumen (Black *et al.*, 1999), interpersonal skills (Bird and Osland, 2004) and systems management skills (Bird and Osland, 2004). Because these variables fall under Leiba-O'Sullivan's (1999) definition of dynamic skills, these findings suggest that the three factors encompass intercultural competencies that serve as "building blocks" in the development of other global leadership capabilities. Moreover, the set of intercultural competencies was associated with higher levels of competency transfer as well as higher levels of job performance.

The findings by Furuya and associates points to an important issue – how does this set of intercultural competency factors with their attendant dimensions relate to the larger set of global leadership competencies? One established model of global leadership competencies is the global leadership pyramid (see Figure 1), developed by Bird and Osland (2004) and subsequently refined by Osland (2008). The perception management and self-management factors match up well with the threshold trait and attitudes and orientations levels of the pyramid. Additionally, the relationship management factor aligns with the interpersonal skills level of the pyramid. The 17 intercultural competency dimensions flesh out in detail the foundational layers of Bird and Osland's, 2004 model, allowing for more concrete hypothesis development and subsequent empirical testing of the hypotheses. More specifically, it can be argued that relationship interest, interpersonal engagement, emotional sensitivity, self-awareness and social flexibility provide foundational competencies that allow for and support mindful communication in intercultural contexts, contribute to the creation and maintenance of trust relationships and facilitate the effective participation and leadership of multicultural teams.

For practitioners, the lack of an integrative framework that provides direction regarding intercultural competencies that are important for inclusion in global
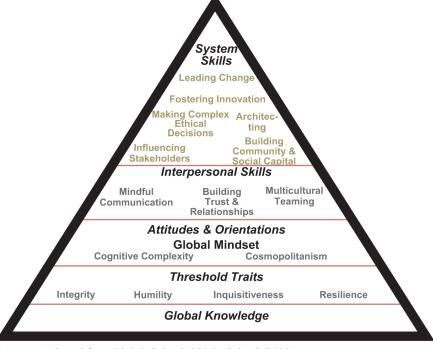
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Figure 1.
Global leadership
competency pyramid

Sources: Adapted from Bird & Osland (2004); Osland (2008)

leadership development and assessment initiatives has been a hindrance to organizations. This lack of guidance from social science forces practitioners to continually wonder, "What competencies should we build our global leadership programs upon?" Similarly, the intense need to develop and retain global talent requires that global leadership competencies be measurable so that firms can assess and develop those competencies within their human capital. Knowing that you can develop global skills has the potential to enhance ambition and allow managers to see themselves as growing in their skill set, thus producing loyalty and productivity within a firm's talent base (see Capelli, 2008). Indeed, the findings of Furuya *et al.* (2009) appear to support Capelli's thesis.

Without a foundational framework they are forced to traverse the entire field in search of which competencies to include and which to exclude in their program designing efforts. Or, conversely, often the idea of scouring through the research literature proves daunting, and instead decision making regarding competency inclusion in global leadership programs relies upon intuition, copying what other companies have done, armchair theorizing, guesswork, or abandonment of the effort altogether. The outcome is idiosyncratic leadership development programs that vary widely in terms of competencies addressed both within industries and across industries, and the lack of successful development of actual global leaders within firms. The value-added of the proposed framework for organizations is that it can serve as a ready template upon which practitioners can operate from in their global leadership

development design efforts. Operating in tandem with social scientists, assessment of their development efforts would serve to refine the framework incrementally over time, and allow for more focused training and assessment refinements to ensue within organizational development programs.

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