

**WITKIN'S COGNITIVE STYLES AND FIELD THEORY APPLIED TO THE STUDY OF
GLOBAL MANAGERS AND OD PRACTITIONERS**

*(BOOK CHAPTER 6, WINTER 2006-2007: RESEARCH IN ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE AND
DEVELOPMENT, VOLUME 16- RESEARCH IN ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT,
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Abstract

There has been an upsurge of publications based on Hermann Witkin's ground breaking work on cognitive styles and human perception differentiated into field dependent and field independent styles (Winerman, 2006, Nisbett et al, 2005, Nisbett, 2003). This paper builds on current and

past research of Witkin et al., and applies his concepts to the study of global managers and OD practitioners. The goal is to describe core aspects of culture related challenges which global managers and OD practitioners have to overcome, and ends with proposing future research on possibilities of training global managers and OD practitioners in order to develop Integrated Perceptual-Cognitive Ability (IPCA). Such an IPCA competence would allow them to master both field-dependent and field-independent perceptual-cognitive skills.

Key Words: Witkin, Field Dependence, cognitive styles, global managers, OD practitioners, Integrated Perceptual-Cognitive Ability

I. Scope of this paper

As multinational companies and OD consultancies expand to compete globally, they are faced with the challenges of increasing cultural diversity, and the demand for additional sets of interpersonal competencies and cultural literacy. An increasing percentage of the managers within global companies and a growing number of OD experts working abroad have to work closely together with people of other cultures on activities that transcend national borders. Failure to manage these cross-cultural relationships could mean significant business risks and costs.

Substantial work has been done in the area of cross-cultural management (Schneider & Barsoux, 1997; Redding, 1992; Roberts & Boyacigiller, 1984; Harris & Moran, 1979, 1987), cross-cultural interpersonal interaction (Gudykunst, 1991), multicultural teams (Adler, 1985; Hambrick, Davison, Snell & Snow, 1998), global organisational design (Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1989). All of these studies point to the impact of globalisation on leadership qualifications (Saner, 2001), on competencies required to manage non-

business interfaces (Saner, Sondergaard & Yiu, 2000) and on cultural variances of teaching the Harvard Case Method (Saner & Yiu 1994). However, as yet, insufficient attention has been paid to the role requisites of global managers and internationally active OD experts.

Building on research by Denison, Hooijberg and Quinn (1995) which emphasise the need to focus on the cognitive and behavioural complexities of managerial leadership, and the work by Kanungo and Mendonca (1996) which calls for culture-contingent leadership approaches when working in developing countries this article proposes that global management and international OD competence requires specific cognitive abilities. These abilities are needed to manage cognitive complexity and to deal with the role ambiguity inherent in the complex role structure of a global manager and of an international OD expert. Building on initial work relating to this topic (Yiu & Saner, 2000), the authors raise two theoretical questions, namely:

1. What are the perceptual-cognitive requisites that global managers and international OD experts have to fulfil in order to carry out their functions effectively within a multicultural environment?
2. Are there specific perceptual-cognitive abilities that distinguish a global manager from a parochial manager and an international OD expert from a parochial OD expert?

The authors postulate that intercultural adaptation, especially regarding cognitive capacity, is needed in order to guarantee a global manager's and the international OD expert's effectiveness during his/her transnational assignments. It is further hypothesised that one of the defining feature of the global managers' and international OD experts' competencies and effectiveness is their ability to manage perceptual-cognitive complexity.

Mastery of perceptual-cognitive complexity is also required of the direct reports in the various foreign subsidiaries who have to work for their expatriate global managers/supervisors. While more attention has been given to the pre-departure training (expatriation) of the managers, much less attention has been given to the need for acculturation of the employees in the subsidiary of a global company. While the authors suggest that subordinate effectiveness should also be studied, the main emphasis of this paper focuses on the global manager, not on his/her subordinates.

The same observation can be made with regard to the client system of an OD expert working in foreign countries and in different cultural environments. His/her clients and their respective employees have to adjust to the professional and national cultural background of the OD expert. As described below, OD theory and practice is also culture-bound and needs to be adapted to different cultural contexts. The adaptation requires mutual adjustments by the OD experts and his/her client system. Insufficient attention has been given in the literature to the adjustments required by the client and client system. However, this paper focuses on the OD expert, not his/her client system.

II. Cultural Influences and Differences

Nationalities and their respective cultures affect an individual in numerous interconnected ways, most importantly, values, cognitive schema, demeanour and language (Hambrick, Davison, Snell & Snow, 1998). These culture/nationality driven characteristics consequently affect a person's perception and behaviour, as well as how the person is perceived by others in a multinational context (Figure 1).

(Insert Figure 1 here)

Language. Language affects the person's ability to participate in work related interchanges as well as social activities. National background influences to a great extent the English proficiency of the person, which is the Lingua Franca of today's business world. The ease and familiarity in using English and other local languages tend to shorten or lengthen the psychological distance which already exist between persons of different cultures and nationalities..

Demeanour. A substantial body of data is available concerning the differences in outward physical behaviour, or demeanour, of people of different nationalities and cultures. Most commonly documented are those relating to eye contact, physical proximity, punctuality, conversational style, interruption patterns, and physiological reactions to emotional stimuli (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988; Hall, 1983; Mesquita & Frijda, 1992). Differences in behaviour tend to create irritation, reinforce stereotypes and heighten the perceived psychological distance among multinational teams. These differences can also cause a breakdown in communication and disrupt group cohesion (Hall, 1969).

Personal value. Research done by Laurent (1983) and by England (1975) has shown that managerial values which business executives bring to their tasks are predominantly due to national systems of beliefs (cultural values). Personal values as defined by Hofstede (1980) are "a broad tendency to prefer certain states of affairs over others". Hofstede further says that culture is the programming of the mind (1991). The value dimensions most often mentioned by management theorists are individualism vs. collectivism, universalism vs. particularism, power distance, relationship to time, and uncertainty avoidance (Parsons & Shils 1951; Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck 1961; Hofstede 1980; 1991; England 1975; Triandis 1982; Trompenaars 1993).

Cognition. National culture affects one's cognitive schema, or what one knows, assumes, or perceives about the world (Lord & Foti, 1986). March and Simon (1958) and Maruyama (1980) point out that individuals with diverse cultural/national background differ in terms of the knowledge they possess. This can include knowledge of facts, events, and trends; knowledge of assumptions about future events; knowledge about alternatives; and knowledge of assumptions about how consequences are attached to alternatives. For example, individuals of heterogeneous national background tend to know, assume and perceive different things about their respective countries (Walsh 1995).

In their comparative study, Mesquita and Frijda (1992) found that national culture affects not only cognitive content (knowledge), but also the processing and interpretation of new cognitive content as well as the way they perceive potentially emotional stimuli. Their findings echo the work done by the anthropologists in this field.

In sum, the global manager's and the international OD expert's nationality and cultural background tend to determine his/her value system, cognitive schema, demeanour and English language proficiency. These characteristics in term, we assume, play an important part in determining his/her role effectiveness in a transnational setting when dealing with culturally heterogeneous groups. The authors argue that of the four major cultural determinants mentioned above, the impact of cognitive schema, especially, the perceptual-cognitive orientation and reaction to social and emotional stimuli on the managerial behaviour is least studied. Therefore, it warrants a more in depth analysis of these perceptual-cognitive requisites of global managers.

III. Witkin's field and cognitive style theory

Recent research and publications by Winerman (2006), Nisbett and Miyamoto (2002), Nisbett ((2003), and Nisbett and Norenzayan (2002) have brought to

the fore the pioneering work done by Hermann Witkin and his colleagues which were unfortunately left dormant since the untimely death of Witkin in 1979. As stated by one of Witkin's close associate, J.W. Berry (2006),

“His untimely death was a devastating blow to the field, and no one came forward to maintain the momentum of this very active area” (p.2)

Witkin's work is a continuation of the Gestalt psychologists' pioneering work on human perception by Max Wertheimer, Wolfgang Koehler, Kurt Koffka, Kurt Lewin, Kurt Goldstein and others most of whom emigrated from Germany and taught at the New School of Social Research in New York City starting from the mid 1930s. Witkin studied Gestalt psychology and Gestalt perception, and deepened the understanding of perception and cognition through his ground breaking studies focusing on the link between perception and cognition.

Borrowing from Nisbett (2003)¹, the following are the main features of Witkin's work applied to cognition and perception. Nisbett states that Witkin and his colleagues showed some people are less likely than others to separate an object from its surrounding environment. Based on the results of his research, Witkin created a dimension in human cognition which he called “field dependence” referring to the degree to which perception of an object is influence by the background or environment in which it appears.

Witkin and his colleagues measured field dependence in a variety of ways. One of these was the Rod and Frame Test. In this test the participant looks into a long box at the end of which is a rod around which is a frame around. The rod and frame can be tilted independently of each other and the participants' task is to indicate when the rod

¹ Pp. 42-43

is completely vertical. The participant is considered field dependent to the extent that judgements of the rod's verticality are influenced by the position of the frame.

A second way of testing field dependence is to place people in a chair that tilts independently of the room in which it is placed. In this test, called the Body Adjustment Test, the participant is considered field dependent to the extent that judgements of the verticality of the participant's own body are influenced by the tilt of the room. A third way, and the easiest to work with, is the Embedded Figures Test. In this test, the task is to locate a simple figure that is embedded in a much more complex figure. The longer it takes people to find the simple figure in its complicated context, the more field dependent they are assumed to be.

Applying Witkin's concepts and test instruments to cross-cultural settings, Ji et al (2000) presented European Americans and East Asians with the Rod-and-Frame Test developed by Witkin and colleagues. East Asians made more errors than European Americans, indicating that East Asians were attending more to the whole field and thus had more difficulty ignoring the frame. Extending this line of work, Kitayama et al., (2003) recently developed the Framed-Line Test (FLT), which allows measurement of holistic versus analytic perception in the same task format, and they replicated the findings. Furthermore, East Asians not only attend more to the field, they attend to it earlier, they remember more about it, and they 'bind' salient target objects to the field in memory.

Summarizing key points of recent research by Nisbett et al., Lea Winerman (2006) reports for the APA monitor that cognitive differences between Westerners and Asians show up in other areas as well. For example, in tests of categorization, Americans are more likely to group items based on how well the items fit into categories by type. For example a cow and a chicken might go together because they are both animals.

Asians, in contrast, are more likely to group items based on relationships – so a cow and grass might go together because a cow eats grass.

Another difference between Westerners and Asians regards the fundamental attribution error – a mainstay Western psychological theory for the last 30 years that, it turns out, may not be so fundamental after all. The theory posits that people generally over-emphasize personality-related explanations for others' behavior, while under-emphasizing or ignoring contextual factors. So, for example, a man may believe he tripped and fell because of a crack in the sidewalk, but assumes that someone else fell because of clumsiness.

However most East Asians do not fall prey to this error. They are much more likely to consider contextual factors when trying to explain other peoples' behavior. In a 1994 study, for example, psychologists Morris and Peng (1994) analyzed American and Chinese newspaper accounts of recent murders. They found that American reporters emphasized the personal attributes of the murderers, while Chinese reporters focused more on situational factors.

Cognitive style, according to Berry (1976), is a cultural phenomenon. In other words, the eco-cultural system in which a person resides will determine his/her preferred cognitive style. Witkin and Berry (1975) examined different societies and found that there were substantial differences among them in field dependence. Farmers, who live in societies where they must coordinate their actions with others, were found to be more field dependent than were people who hunt and gather, or who herd animals for a living. The latter sorts of livelihoods require less coordination with the actions of those of others, and social, political, and economic role relations tend to be relatively simple. Industrialized people have levels of field dependence comparable to those of mobile hunter-gatherers and herders. Like mobile peoples, industrialized peoples have

substantial freedom in their work lives and relative simplicity in role relations. There are of course alternative explanations available for these results, but taken on their face value they are consistent with the proposition that culture affects perception at a deep level.

Summarizing the cultural differences in field dependency and cognitive styles, field independent individuals tend to be more autonomous, pay more attention to concrete facts and are equipped with cognitive restructuring and analytic abilities. In contrast persons of industrialized societies tend to have a field independent cognitive style and persons of traditional societies tend to have a field dependent style. There are however, fundamental differences (see Figure 2) and important implications.

(Insert Figure 2 Here)

Winerman (2006) observes that the idea that culture and societal contexts can shape the way people think at these deep levels is a departure for psychology, which as a field traditionally assumed that basic cognitive processes are universal. Nisbett and Norenzayan (2002) like Berry emphasize the fact that the environment can have an important determining impact on human perception and human cognition; thereby bringing into question the assumption of autonomous thinking and perceptions of environmental data.

Witkin and his colleagues argued that field dependence is in part the result of an orientation toward people. An outward orientation toward the social environment encourages an orientation toward the field in general. Consistent with this proposal, Witkin and his colleagues found that more socially oriented people were more field dependent than were more introverted people (Witkin, 1969). They also found that

Orthodox Jewish boys, who live under substantial social constraints and with strong social role obligations, were more field dependent than more secular Jewish boys, who were in turn more field dependent than Protestant boys (Adevai, Silverman, & McGough, 1970; Dershowitz, 1971; Meizlik, 1973). Both sets of findings were obtained even when IQ was controlled.

Communication and social interactions are essential parts of a manager's task. It is so as well for a OD consultant. Communication is a function of perception, information processing and sense making. In an inter-cultural context, the sense making could be skewed due to the cultural-bound cognitive processes. In order to be effective in a cross-cultural role-set, managers and OD consultants alike need to "stretch" not only their behavioral repertoire but also their perception and cognitive capacity.

IV. Cultural Adaptation of Global Managers and Role Requisites

After examining the corporate structure of today's large European, American and Asian companies, Bartlett and Ghoshal (1993, 1997) proposed a model of managerial and leadership roles which are presumed to be essential for the global organizations. They state that these roles go beyond the traditional roles of a manager and outlined what the needed personal profiles of these front-line, senior and top-level managers should look like. What is missing in their analysis are the perceptual-cognitive dynamics which influence and shape the dynamic interactions between the global manager and the motivational forces of his/her culturally heterogeneous subordinates and external counterparts such as foreign government officials, clients and advocacy groups.

Perhaps Bartlett and Ghoshal (1997) assume that effective leadership behaviour is universal and hence does not warrant further elaboration. Hofstede (1980, 1991) on

the other hand has demonstrated clearly that national culture and corresponding work values have to be taken into account when discussing international, cross-cultural and organisational leadership practices.

Based on Hofstede's work, Kanungo and Mendonca (1996) argue eloquently for the need to adapt prevalent leadership models of the West and the North to fit the cultural specifics of the East and the South, and propose to define the effective leadership role and behaviour through the stand point of *perceived* leadership behaviour and dispositions. In other words, Kanungo and Mendonca's work and that of other scholars for example Sinha (1980,1990), Triandis (1993); help to remind us of the necessity to understand effective managerial leadership within the larger socio-cultural context, and to accept the fact that the transferring of Western role models to a non-western work environment are of limited utility.

Combining these two strains of theoretical development, on the one hand Bartlett and Ghoshal's call for transformational managerial and leadership qualifications of global companies and on the other hand Kanungo and Mendonca and Triandis' emphasis on cultural contingency model of leadership, this paper extends this line of inquiry by examining more in depth the cognitive-perceptual abilities of an effective global manager from the stand point of a culturally heterogeneous manager-subordinate role set. Moreover, this paper attempts to further clarify the perceptual-cognitive requisites of a global manager and to define his/her personal qualifications.

The authors' definition of the role requisites of a global manager goes deeper than the definition given for instance by Hooper (1979) who lists the skills associated with multiculturalism. Instead, the authors focus on the perceptual-cognitive processes underlying the multi-cultural social interactions, and attempt to define how these social interactions in turn foster cognitive and behavioural changes. Global manager is thus defined as a manager who has the *cognitive-affective and social abilities* and skills to

communicate effectively a) with people of any culture encountered and b) in any situation involving a group of people of diverse cultural backgrounds.

Ideally, global managers should be individuals who can move from one culture to another with ease. They should be persons from a “third culture” who have acquired cognitive and behavioural patterns that are shaped, created and learned in the process of relating their own cultural systems to the cognitive systems of individuals from (other cultures. Therefore, the global managers are not only the transmitters of their own cultural cognates, but also the active receivers of cognates of other culture bearers (Megginson & Megginson, 1996).

The authors hence assume that a successful cultural adaptation leads to sustainable behavioural changes, such as the development of transnational leadership competencies. Moreover, the assumption is that this can only happen when there is a fundamental perceptual-cognitive realignment and a repatterning of the existing perceptual-cognitive repertoire. In other words, the authors recognise differences between short-term transient changes and long-term permanent changes of perceptual-cognitive abilities resulting from intercultural exposures.

Specifically, the authors postulate that in order to be effective in the multicultural context, managers will have to go through a personal transformational learning process. Such change is related to the cognitive structures and processing skills which the global manager acquires intuitively in the process of multiple transnational assignments or consciously through awareness and deeper level reflection.

Adaptation Challenge 1: Cultural Distance Between Cultures

A global manager's ability to be effective depends on a variety of factors ranging from business acumen to intercultural competence. Prominent among factors that influence the intercultural competence is the combination of (a) the cultural distance

and type of culture/nationality-driven diversity between the global manager's heterogeneous role sets and (b) the personal attributes and behavioural repertoire of the global manager. The former has a direct and positive relationship with the degree of cultural adaptation, while the later is often linked to the manager's ability to make sense of the new situation and make appropriate adaptation.

When looking at the components of culture, e.g., customs, language, religion and technology, it can be said that the more similar these cultural components are, the less impact they have on managerial effectiveness (Earley, 1987). On the contrary, the more diverse the cultures, the greater their influence on managerial effectiveness (Megginson & Megginson, 1996). It can also be said that each culture has its own role definition and expectations concerning a leader, a manager, a subordinate, a guest. Therefore, when the cultural distance is great between the role set, there is greater probability of either role ambiguity or role conflict. Both could lead to a fair amount of stress and result in mutual mistrust.

For the purpose of this paper, culture can be viewed as a set of common understandings which characterise the social system's milieu (Caltin & Lad, 1995). In this context, the *cultural distance* could be best illustrated by using Hofstede's four dimensions of culture, namely, individualism vs. collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity vs. femininity. Hofstede illustrated the cultural similarity versus dissimilarity by measuring the proximity of countries and by how readily they merge to form a compact cluster (1980). Thus, Colombia, Mexico and Venezuela are very similar and readily form a cluster that is of different value orientation from a cluster countries like Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Netherlands and Finland.

The authors strongly link the individual's ability to make appropriate cultural adaptation with his/her perceptual-cognitive processing skills and his/her cognitive capacity to

master the complexity of multiple juxtaposed and overlaid cultural realities. In making sense of their intercultural experiences, the global managers cannot solely rely on either the field independent (FID) mode of information seeking and processing, nor only on the field dependent (FD) mode. Instead, global managers need to employ a combination of the two in order to perceive the context of the exchange as well as the likely cultural implications in this context, then draw the proper conclusion from it and decide on the best course of action.

Relying solely on a FID or solely on a FD perceptual-cognitive functioning would most likely lead to miscommunication and misjudgment. Both miscommunication and misjudgment tend to engender mutual feeling of frustration and rejection which in turn reinforce the initial perception and feeling of social distance and alienation. The manager with a dominant FID orientation would be perceived as arrogant or “too distant”; the other with a dominant FD orientation as “too laid back” or incompetent.

While globalization has brought a degree of convergence in terms of accepted international business conduct and managerial behavior, such convergence tend to disguise the “cultural gulf” lying beneath. The cultural distance is more evident when expatriate managers deal with staff who have had limited exposure to western education and with business partners and stakeholders who are traditional in their perspectives and behavior.

Adaptation Challenge 2: Culturally Appropriate Role Taking Across Cultural Boundaries

The cultural adjustment of a global manager has to be viewed from both role theory and social exchange theory perspectives. This is to say that the role taking process of a global leader/manager within a multicultural context is strongly shaped by the cultural backgrounds of the global manager and the whole palate of role sets of others

who communicate to him/her important role information. These role sets include not only vertical dyad linkages but also horizontal and network relationships and concomitantly by his/her perceptual and cognitive abilities.

Following this further, the authors assume that an FD approach would allow the global manager to more accurately perceive and receive important role information from his/her environment during various role episodes² thanks to his/her ability to empathize and build a sense of togetherness with others. Conversely, a FID approach would allow the global manager to avoid becoming too confluent with his/her immediate milieu and become fully local. An FID ability thus would allow him/her to retain a separate perspective and see the world through multiple lenses (perspectives).

Cultural adjustment in this ongoing and interdependent cycle of role sending and role behaviour sequence (role taking) (Katz & Kahn, 1976), as discussed in the preceding section, goes further than being aware of the cultural differences of the other in a multi-cultural context. Instead, the authors argue that global managers are required to not only master to a greater degree the cognitive understanding of the other cultures, but also attain subjective familiarity of the other culture as an insider would be able to attain³ (Hanvey, 1979). Like a chameleon, the global manager knows how to activate different sets of knowledge-attitude constructs in order to mediate between overlapping and contradictory role definitions and expected role behavior. Yet, such psychological elasticity could not be achieved without the global manager undergoing profound learning and developmental changes. This ability to acquire and integrate

² Role episode, according to the definition of Katz and Kahn (1978), consists of a four-part sequence, namely role expectations (evaluative standards of the role), sent-role (influences from the role sender), received role (perception of the focal person and his self-expectation) and role behaviour (focal person's response to the complex of information and influence thus received).

³ Hanvey (1974) proposes a 4-level model to stratify cross-cultural awareness. While level I, II and III address varying degree of cognitive understanding of the other cultures, level IV requires subjective familiarity of the other culture as an insider would be.

both FID and FD cognitive modes is the result of learning through self-awareness, reflection and cognitive self-discipline.

Adaptation Challenge 3: Adequate Social Exchanges Across Cultural Boundaries

Looking at the role requisites of a global manager, the authors found another strand of research useful, namely, the social exchange theory. Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) research has identified low-quality leader-member relations as being characterised by economic (contractual) exchanges that do not progress beyond what is specified in the employment contract, whereas high-quality leader-member relations are characterized as social exchanges that extend beyond what is required of the employment contract (Sparrowe & Liden, 1997). Blau, when describing the differences between social and economic exchanges, said, "Only social exchanges tend to engender feelings of personal obligation, gratitude, and trust; purely economic exchanges as such do not." (1964:94) Thus the high quality exchanges ("in-group") are important for the motivational aspect of the leadership.

The exchanges between the global manager vis-à-vis the multitude of his/her cross-cultural counterparts need to go beyond the economic nature of personal transactions and be rooted in high (in-group) social exchanges. To be effective, global managers need to refer to the social cues communicated by his/her host cultural counterparts in order to achieve the high quality exchanges needed to get things done.

In more collectivist and high power distance societies, the relationship between the manager and his vertical dyadic relationships tend to be characterized as paternalistic. Consequently, the exchange requires it to be more social rather than economically oriented. On the other hand, in more individualistic and medium to low power distance societies, the interpersonal exchange tends to be more impersonal and economic (contractual). A FD mode would allow the global manager to be in tune

with the emotional stimuli which constitutes the bulk of the social exchange while a FID mode would allow the global manager to take stock of the situation. Residing in between cultures, global managers need to develop a balanced, sophisticated view of his/her operational realities (centre of the concentric cultural contexts) by maintaining a bi-focal view point (external *and* internal frame of references).

Inter-Cultural Role Requisites of a global manager

In summary, appropriate cultural adjustment requires personal attributes which pertain to high level intercultural awareness (Hanvey, 1974; Adler, 1985; Tung, 1994; Tung & Worm, 1997; Harris & Moran, 1979), psychological elasticity (Maruyama, 1970), and integrative cognitive functioning (Saner & Yiu, 1994).

Instead of the ability to imagine and to learn a variety of roles in the context of one's national culture, a competent global manager has to have the ability to imagine and empathize with the different viewpoints and roles in foreign cultures by taking the cues from his/her intercultural counterparts.

The second, psychological elasticity, designates the psychic mobility which allows the global managers to move in and out of different cultural constructs, in and out of old and new relationships and in and out of a multitude of organizational roles. Psychological elasticity proscribes the global manager's ability to temporarily suspend his/her subjective valuation and to blur the boundary between one's self and non-self (Maruyama, 1970).

However, the third attribute – integrative cognitive functioning – is the least developed construct. The authors define it as an integrated cognitive-perceptual ability constituting both Witkin's cognitive abilities namely field dependence and field independence cognitive orientations. Although least known, the authors consider the

integrative cognitive functioning as most vital in order to play the role of global manager effectively and the most challenging to master.

V. Culture gap between traditional OD values, the organizational culture of the client system and the client system's national culture.

Conventional OD theory and practice has been considered as being influenced by humanistic psychology and corresponding value preferences emphasizing participatory, trusting and more egalitarian approaches to interpersonal communications.

It has also been reported that because of this humanistic value preference, OD inevitably is limited in its application when faced with environments which favor more traditional, hierarchical, and secretive value orientation (Hodgetts & Luthans, 1991).

Scholars have described the tensions between traditional OD practice and their application to non-US environments for instance Kenneth Murrell (1984, 1986, 1988), Saner and Yiu (2002), Sorensen et al. (2001), and Fagenson-Eland et al. (2004). All of these authors describe the need for adaptation of OD practice to a multitude of non-US environments.

As a way of clarifying the possible value gap between conventional OD and national culture, Johnson and Golembiewski (1992) summarized Jaeger's (1986) conceptualization of Hofstede's (1980, 2001) four value dimensions (namely Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Masculinity versus Femininity and Individualism vs. Collectivism) and accordingly categorized traditional OD value orientation within the frame of Hofstede's culture dimensions as follows (Figure 3):

(Insert Figure 3 here)

Comparing the two profiles, the reader can easily see that the OD orientation does not fit with the dominant values of several of the largest country cultures of the world. To illustrate this point, it is informative to compare some of the prevalent Hofstede Value Orientations of select countries with traditional OD value orientations namely:

- a) High Power Distance (strong hierarchical-power based on authority and less on professional competence-expertise power) -- for instance countries with high power distance are countries like Malaysia, Philippines, Mexico, Brazil, France, Turkey and Belgium.
- b) High Uncertainty Avoidance (bureaucratic rituals and procedures as means to minimize ambiguities, too much informality in personal relations and preference for rules and procedures rather than informal arrangements) -- Countries with High Uncertainty Avoidance are e.g. Greece, Portugal, Guatemala, Uruguay, Belgium, Japan, Spain and France.
- c) Masculinity vs. Femininity (Masculinity favors acquisition of material possessions and hoarding of information; whereas Femininity stresses relationships and importance of feelings as forms of sensors to assess environmental interactions) -
- Countries with high scores on masculinity values are Japan, Austria, Venezuela, Switzerland, Mexico, and Great Britain, while countries with high femininity scores are e.g. Sweden, Norway, Netherlands, Costa Rica and Finland.
- d) Individualist value orientation (Individualism means that a person aims at self-reliance, independence from groups while Collectivism highlights an emphasis on belonging to a group and basing human interactions on insider/outsider distinctions) -- Countries with high Individualistic value orientations are e.g. USA, Australia, UK, Canada, Netherlands and New Zealand, while countries with high

Collectivist orientations are Guatemala, Venezuela, Indonesia, Pakistan Thailand, and China.

A potential conflict exists in developing countries whenever a donor country conducts an OD intervention in a recipient country of the Southern Hemisphere. However, research results of OD practice in developing countries seem to suggest that OD success is actually higher in situations when the value distance between humanistic OD and the client's traditional value orientation is actually large and not small (Johnson & Golembiewski, 1992).

The reason for this seeming contradiction might lie in the underestimation of the power factor of OD projects in developing countries. The OD practitioner working in the South is supported by institutional power (donor country guarantees budget, resources, governmental influence), hence any reported acceptance of egalitarian OD techniques should be seen in the context of power asymmetry between "northern" consultant (high power) and "southern" client (low power). The beneficiary is in need, hence dependent, resulting in having low power. The client is therefore, most of the time willing, out of necessity, to drop his/her insistence on respect for his/her own high power needs (high power distance) typical of most developing country cultures.

Relation between Field Dependence, Hofstede's Cultural Value Orientation and OD practice

Correlation between FID and Masculinity

Hofstede cites the study by John Berry (1976) when Berry carried the study of perceptual-cognitive differentiation to the ecological level. Between 1964 and 1974, Berry studied more than 1000 members of 21 different communities in Africa,

Australia, Europe and North America using a battery of psychological differentiation tests. Berry then found systematic differences in levels of field dependence that he related to factors in the ecological and cultural situations of these communities. Based on the research done by Berry, Hofstede (2001) proposes a correlation between field independence and masculinity on one side and femininity and field dependence on the other hand. He states (p.305),

“Conceptually, valuing social relationships (cultural femininity) converges with relying on external frames of references as guides to behavior (field dependence); valuing ego gratification (cultural masculinity) converges with relying more on internal frame of reference (field independence)”.

Correlation between OD Interventions and Femininity

Applied to an internationally active OD expert, this would mean that an OD expert applying traditional OD theory and method would be more congruent with enterprises and countries high in femininity values and low in a masculinity value orientation. The opposite match, that is a more femininity oriented OD expert working for a company embedded in high masculinity value orientation, could lead to misunderstandings and in worse case to conflicts.

Communications in a high masculinity oriented client systems, according to Hofstede, would most likely be based more on numbers, deadlines, production figures, cost and sales forecasts etc., rather than on expressions of feelings, open discussions of interpersonal dynamics. Fagenson-Eland, Ensher and Burke (2004) hypothesize that OD intervention in countries with high masculinity score would be more likely to use training and development, career development initiatives, team building and technology integration than countries with low masculinity score. Rarely, conflict resolution types of interventions could be conducted in high masculinity countries or companies. Although their comparative study of OD and intervention tools used in 7

countries (mostly English speaking countries except 2) provided inconclusive findings, it does shade some light on different cultural preferences of OD interventions.

Instead of looking at how culture influence the choice of OD interventions, the authors postulate that the perceptual-cognitive ability might be a more sensitive predictor in constructing a productive client-consultant relationship of OD and the appropriate choice of OD tools for intervention.

Perceptual-Cognitive ability of OD Expert

Similar to global manager, OD expert needs to adopt its perceptual-cognitive style when working in a cross-cultural context. Although OD value prescribes a more relationship orientation, the general mode of cognitive processes of OD practitioners remains embedded in the ecological environment of their upbringing – analytical, causal and field independent. Therefore, when working in cross-cultural context, there remains the need to adapt and adjust in order to perceive the full context of social interactions and organizational dynamics through a pair of “local” lens. Cognitive complexity, the authors would argue, is therefore even more paramount for OD practitioner in the cross-cultural context since s/he needs to be an insider to fully appreciate the interpersonal dynamics at different levels and remains at the margin to grasp the underlying causes of the organizational issues.

VI. Integrative Cognitive Functioning (Integrated Perceptual-Cognitive Ability)

Managing perceptual-cognitive complexity in a multi-cultural context would be the ability to function simultaneously in field independent and field dependent modes. This means that global managers and international OD experts should be able to perceive figure and ground simultaneously, i.e. perceiving the totality of a configuration (gestalt) at changing intervals alternating from figure to ground, to total field (embedded-ness).

Scarce data exist concerning the perceptual cognitive structure of the global managers. Rhinesmith (1993) mentioned the “global mindset” of the global managers based on personal observation without going into the detail as to the perceptual-cognitive processes. Others attempted to understand the need for perceptual-cognitive requisite by looking at the learning style of the international managers.

When comparing the learning style of the “most international” managers (identified by consensus of the total group) with the other international managers among 250 executives from West Europe, Ratiu (1993) observed that the two groups used different learning strategies as identified by Kolb and Fry (1975) in cross-cultural situations and re-labelled them the red and blue loops (see figure 4). “Most international” managers used a microstrategy, which was more descriptive, impressionistic, relational and intuitive (the blue loop); while the other group used a macrostrategy which was more analytical, explanatory, and theorizing (the red loop). They were not interested in the rationale or the logic of events; instead they were interested in perceiving the situation by applying different frames of references.

(Insert Figure 4 here)

Applying Witkin’s terminology, the Red Loop resembles the cognitive processing of the field-independent (FID) mode while the Blue Loop more of the field-dependent (FD) mode. In other words, the international managers exhibit more of the FID traits and actively construct the “field” of intercultural interactions in accordance with their logic for sense making. “Most international” managers, on the contrary, seek to make sense of the situation by looking at other actors in the social environment for clues to

understand the intercultural interactions. This temporary suspension of judgment and bystander position are characteristics of the FD mode.

Taking Ratiu's (1993) observation further, the authors suggest that global manager cannot function effectively in a multi-cultural context without taking on the perceptual-cognitive skills and traits of both processing orientation. Therefore, in view of the eco-cultural determinant theory posited by Berry (1976), the authors suggest that global managers have to acquire new perceptual-cognitive abilities during their tenure abroad.

Cognitive schema, according to Rosch (1978), could be grouped into three levels of structural categories – super-ordinate (overall attitude or assessment), basic (beliefs), and subordinate (values). He also assumed that cognitive schema have an associative network and spreading activation points. Therefore, the activation of certain cognitive/attitude/knowledge structure could be triggered due to different level of motivation and cognitive effort.

Individuals exert varying amounts of effort to process information concerning an attitude object (Chaiken, 1980; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). As the type of cognitive processing changes, for example from super-ordinate level to subordinate level, more of a perceptual-cognitive effort is required. Building on the attitude structure and cognitive processing model developed by Thompson and Hunt (1996), one could state that manager's different responses to the social stimuli of cross-cultural interactions should show a difference in perceptual-cognitive structures and processing skills between a parochial and a global manager (see Figure 5).

(Insert Figure 5 here)

In their longitudinal study of cross-cultural transfer of managerial skills and technology, Megginson and Megginson (1996) found that cultural adaptability and managerial effectiveness were interrelated, interdependent, and mutually determinant. Not only does culture influence managers' effectiveness, but managers, in turn, influence the culture in which they operate.

Reality, from the social construction point of view, is nothing but the inter-subjective construction of situations (Berger & Luchmann, 1966). Seen from this standpoint, leadership amongst culturally divergent groups requires a forging of new social realities, which can accommodate all members' idiosyncratic requisites. This process of reshaping and reframing of realities needs to be a two-way process. Both the global manager and the international OD expert and their respective culturally diverse counterparts partake in it together. However the onus of this reshaping and reframing rests more on the shoulders of the global manager and the international OD expert than on the other role partners since by the role definition they are there to influence and to coordinate so that the objectives of the organization or the OD change project can be carried out efficiently and effectively.

The cultural fit between the expatriate leader/manager and the international OD expert and their counterparts (employees or client system) who they come into contact with requires a much higher attention to the context of the interaction and to all its embedded social cues. In other words, effective global managers and effective international OD experts are those who have the cognitive and behavioral capability to recognize and react to paradox, contradiction and complexity in their environment due to cultural differences (Danison, Hooijberg & Quinn, 1995).

Cognitive capability, according to Jacques (1989), can be defined as "the maximum scale and complexity of the world which an individual is able to pattern and construe, including the amount and complexity of information that must be processed in doing

so” (p.33). This capability to perceive and to process complex information requires both the capability to observe and to actively deconstruct information. In keeping with terminology used by Witkin (1978), the former represents a field dependent cognitive style, while the latter a field independent style.

When working in countries of high power distance and high collectivism, a field-independent supervisor might tend to be insensitive to the social cues and rely too much on his/her internal frame of reference. This is typical of the expatriate from the West who finds him/herself being perceived by the host country counterparts as “acting like an elephant in a porcelain shop”.

In countries of medium to low power distance and high individualism, a field dependent supervisor might tend to be oversensitive to the social cues and rely too much on his/her external frame of reference. This is typical of the is the manager from the East/South who finds him/herself being perceived as being “passive”, “evasive”, “reluctant to initiate” and “unwilling to take responsibility”.

Interactions between the two will inevitably lead to frustration and tension. A truly global manager will need to stretch the boundaries of his/her cognitive-perceptual abilities in order to deploy both cognitive styles for the purpose of influencing the attitudes and behaviors of his/her subordinates. By applying an integrated perceptual-cognitive style, he/she can then perceive the unspoken words and find alternatives to elicit compliance and commitment needed to achieving the group’s objectives.

VII. Future Research Agenda

In this article the authors have examined the effect of intercultural interactions on a managers’ ability to function cognitively and identified the role requisites of the global

manager. Similar considerations have been given to an OD consultant. The authors propose a mode of role development and role effectiveness that takes into account the effect of intercultural interfaces on the perceptual-cognitive functioning of the global manager and OD consultant. Further, the authors have shown that the difference between a global manager and a parochial manager and that the difference between a global OD expert and a parochial OD expert may be due to the degree of cognitive adaptation and cognitive restructuring.

The proposed model broadens and links several theoretical areas of organizational behavior, namely: 1) global leadership, 2) cognitive processes, 3) impact of intercultural adaptation and 4) role competencies of a global manager and OD consultant. From research (Hofstede, 2001) it is known that global leadership is a culturally contingent phenomenon and that global leadership requires the management of complexity. Future research should help clarify how such adaptation happens and what effect this adaptation has on an individual's perceptual orientation and cognitive functioning.

Second, different cultural values may lead to different cognitive schema (Lord & Foti, 1986) and processing orientation (Berry, 1976). Future research should help clarify how the role repertoire of a global manager evolves and broadens over time and how this evolution of roles is linked to cognitive structures and processes, and leader-member social exchanges. Findings will also inform the OD experts who are interested in being active globally, particularly in areas of personal development.

Using the analogy of a personal computer, this capacity requires both a Pentium micro processor (cognitive complex structure with multiple associative networks and activating points), a large storage hard disk (cognitive capacity), multiple processing programs e.g., Window 95, Lotus, and Macintosh (multiple sets of mental

programming based on specific cultures), and converters (cultural cognates) to manage the multiple interfaces (information seeking and validation skills).

It is the authors' proposition that research in the area of the perceptual-cognitive processing abilities offers the greatest potential toward an understanding of the role formation and role episodes experienced by a global manager in multi-cultural role sets and to a lesser extent that of an OD expert. Research based on Witkin's work has been widely reported in the field of education (e.g., Simpson et al., 1995; Whyte et al., 1996; Young, 1993) and information technology (e.g., Bates, 1994; Meng, 1991). In contrast, little is reported in the management related literature.

Expected Benefits of Future Research

Based on the hypothesized cognitive differences between global managers/international OD experts and parochial managers/parochial OD experts, selection criteria for being assigned to a subsidiary abroad or for being contracted to conduct an OD assignment in foreign countries could extend beyond the commonly used ones, such as professional expertise and past performance records. In addition, personal attributes pertaining to his/her ability to learn and to successfully adjust interculturally should be assessed.

Such a study of the cognitive styles of effective global managers would contribute to the following:

1. Development of more effective managerial leadership and OD competence in culturally diverse work environments;
2. Preparation of managers and OD experts for organizational change projects in cross-culturally heterogeneous environments

3. Better selection and promotion of global managers and better selection of OD experts due to clearly defined selection criteria based on personal attributes
4. Reduction of expatriate failure rates and failed OD interventions abroad through training in field-dependent and field-independent processing skills
5. Limitation of potential damages to business relationships and opportunities in multicultural contexts through the acquisition of integrated perceptual-cognitive competencies.

A more accurate prediction of intercultural adaptability could also help global companies avoid costly premature termination (direct costs of expatriate relocation) and costly estrangement between expatriates and host country counterparts (indirect social capital costs). Similarly, a more accurate prediction of intercultural adaptability could help an internationally active OD expert broaden his/her client base and increase professional capital.

VIII. Concluding Remarks

To deal with increasing interdependency, complexity and uncertainty inherent in the multinational work environment (“turbulent field” as Trist, 1997, call it), effective perceptual-cognitive skills are fundamental for the success of global managers and international OD experts. The authors suggest that effective global managers and international OD experts need to acquire an integrated perceptual-cognitive style which would encompass the field-dependent and field-independent cognitive skills and which would allow a global manager and an OD consultant alike to constantly shift between scanning the environment for social cues and deconstructing and/or reconstructing the perceptual field in order to enhance personal effectiveness.

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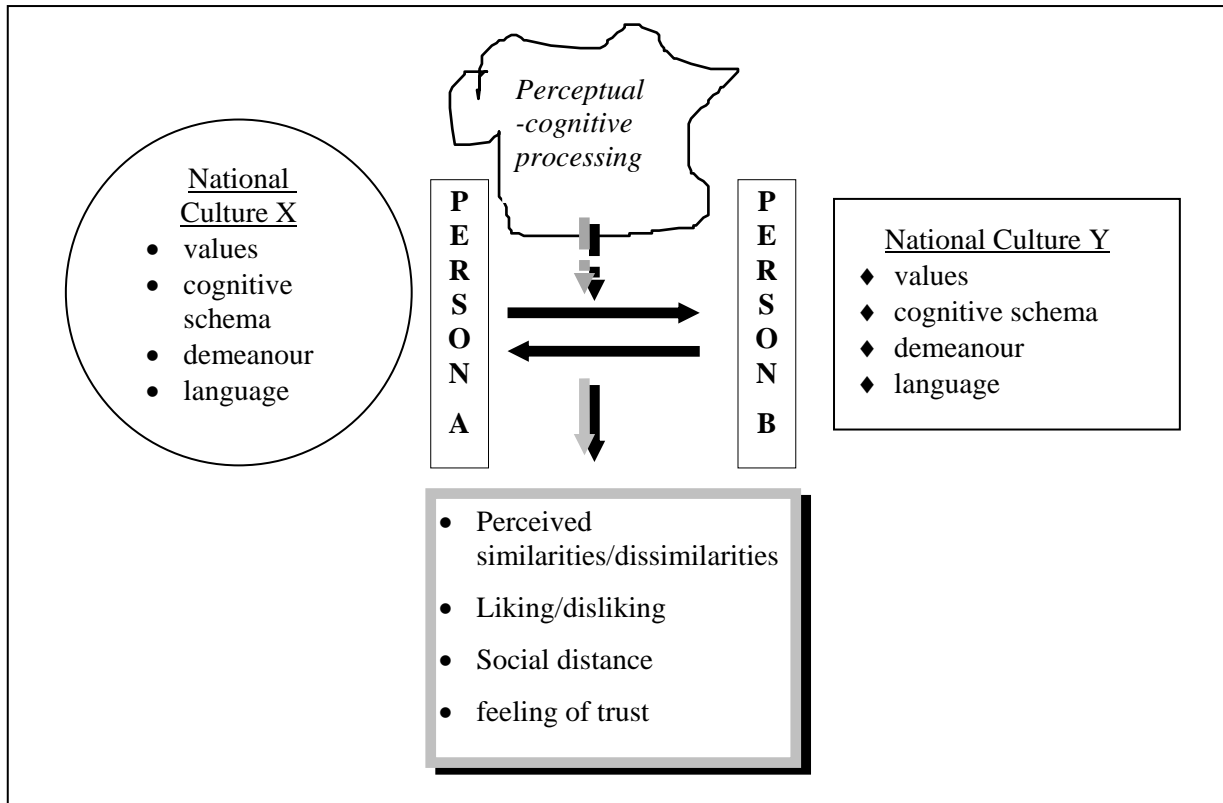


Figure 1: Inter-Cultural Interaction and Its impact on Psycho-social assessment

	<i>Field Dependent (FD)</i>	<i>Field Independent (FID)</i>
<i>Information Seeking Strategy</i>	Wait and see	Act
<i>Frame of Reference</i>	External	Internal
<i>Social Relations</i>	Dependent	Autonomous
<i>Focus of Attention</i>	Emotional Stimuli	Facts and Logic
<i>Skill Set</i>	Interpersonal Skills	Cognitive Restructuring and Analytic Skills
<i>More Frequent in</i>	Asian and Developing Countries	Western and Industrialised Countries
<i>More Prevalent in</i>	Developing Countries Agricultural societies	Developing Countries Hunting & Nomadic societies
<i>More Often among</i>	Women	Men

Figure 2: Contrast of Cognitive Styles according to Witkin (1978) and Berry (1976)

HOFSTEDES' FOUR CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

Power Distance	Uncertainty Avoidance	Masculinity - Femininity	Individualism - Collectivism
Low PD is associated with social egalitarianism and as PD increases, status inequality and distance in social relationships also increase.	Low UA is associated with tolerance of ambiguity and minimised structuring of relationships; high UA leads to elaboration of rules and structures.	Masculinity stresses results and the importance of material things, while femininity stresses the importance of feelings and relationships.	Individualism stresses and tolerates individual uniqueness, while collectivism defines individuals through their social, group characteristics.

JAEGER'S CHARACTERISATION OF TRADITIONAL OD VALUES

Power Distance	Uncertainty Avoidance	Masculinity	Individualism
<p>PD is low.</p> <p>This means that OD values are associated with status equality and the minimization of social differences.</p>	<p>UA is low.</p> <p>OD values stress tolerance of ambiguity and minimize elaborate structuring of relationships.</p>	<p>Masculinity is low</p> <p>Results and things are less associated with OD values than is the feminine stress on feelings and relationships.</p>	<p>Individualism is medium.</p> <p>Jaeger concludes that OD values are inconsistent with both extremes of the Individualism-Collectivism scale. On the one hand, OD stresses and tolerates individual differences, while on the other it facilitates collaboration and teamwork.</p>

Figure 3: Jaeger's comparison between traditional OD values and Hofstede's value dimensions

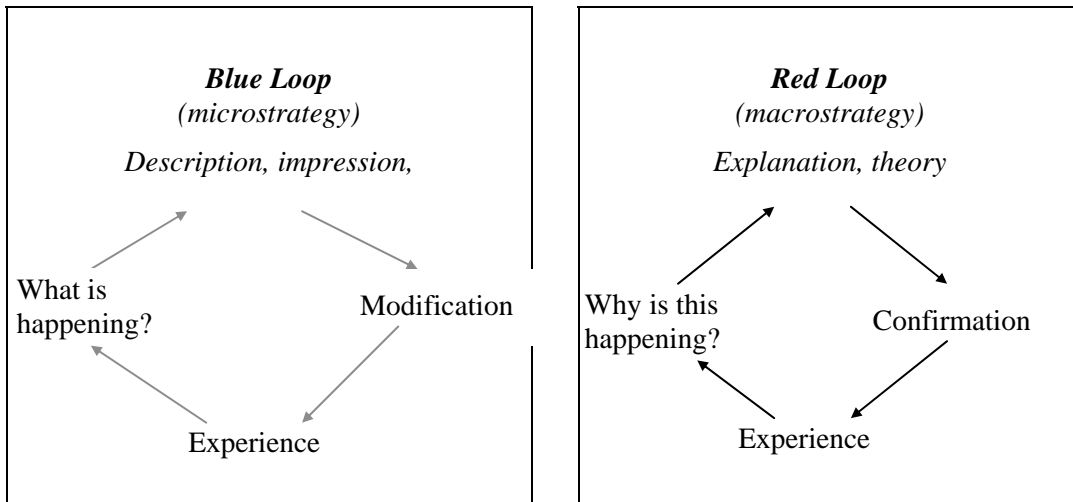


Figure 4: Different Facets of a Fundamental Learning Cycle between the “Most International” and “International” Managers (Ratiu, I., 1993)

Level of Changes	Parochial Manager Parochial /OD Expert	Global Manager /International OD Expert
<i>Overall attitude</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>more culturally aware of the differences</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Empathy with the other culture</i>
<i>Belief system</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Limited and superficial modification of one's own cultural beliefs</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Questioning one's own cultural beliefs</i> • <i>New interpretations associated with cross-cultural signals</i> • <i>New linkages between different beliefs and values</i>
<i>Values</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>No change</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Adding new beliefs</i> • <i>Restructuring of existing cognitive construct into new ones</i> • <i>Greater differentiation of the mental constructs</i> • <i>Increased cognitive complexity</i> • <i>Repaterning of behaviour within one's repertoire so that it is fostering trust</i>
<i>Breath of Perceptual Categories</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Unchanged</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Greatly expanded</i>

Figure 5: Relative Impact of Intercultural Interactions on the Cognitive Structure of Global Managers/International OD experts versus Parochial Managers/Parochial OD experts