THE USE OF COMPETENCIES AND WORKFORCE DIVERSITY: ARE THEY AT CROSS PURPOSES?

Competencies are often incorporated into organizational activities such as selection and performance appraisal. However, their research foundation, and their possible effects on diverse groups, are largely uninvestigated. This paper outlines the possible link between competencies and organizational citizenship behaviours, and will offer some propositions for a culturally diverse workforce.

Introduction

Organizations are continuously seeking improved ways of selecting the ‘best’ people for a particular job or organization, which can be challenging in the face of an increasingly diverse workforce (Ensher, Grant-Vallone & Donaldson, 2001). Particularly in Canada, this activity has become a very complex task, as firms must ensure that all individuals are given fair and equitable treatment, especially concerning the functions of selection, training, and performance appraisal. With the increased number of people from other countries and those who do not come from English, French and British origins entering the Canadian workforce, more emphasis is being placed on non-exclusionary and anti-discriminatory policies and procedures within the realm of diversity management. Two of the most important trends of the past decade are a continuously growing diverse workforce, and increased competition for businesses resulting from the globalization of markets (Jain & Verma, 1996). Developing a “global mindset” has become a key prerequisite for successfully competing and growing in worldwide markets, where diversity is seen as a source of opportunities (Paul, 2000). The interconnections between cultures is resulting in the emergence of cultural mixtures and greater cultural heterogeneity as a result of this globalization (Aponte & Crouch, 1995; Hermans & Kempsen, 1998). The employment of minorities, however, has been one of the most complex organizational and human resource issues over the last 40 years (Jain, Sloane & Horwitz, 2003).

Ethnicity, Diversity and Culture

Diversity can be defined as the presence of differences among members within a social unit, and managing diversity means creating a work environment where no member or group has an advantage or disadvantage over another (D’Netto & Sohal, 1999). This is an ideal state; this is not the case in many organizations. While business professionals tend to refute the existence of discrimination in their organizations, studies have shown its pervasiveness among the experiences of various minority groups (Burke, 1991).

Ethnicity and culture have become extremely important topics in the social science research literature, particularly due to the growing ethnic diversity in North America (Kim, Laroche & Tomiuk, 2001). Cultural pluralism allows cultures to co-exist within one society, and it involves a process where members of the cultures adopt some of the norms of other groups (Nemetz & Christensen, 1996). The
population and workforce in Canada are characteristic of an increasing pluralistic society (Jain, Sloan & Horwitz, 2003). However, while a policy of cultural pluralism has helped to manage diversity in Canada, it has not dealt with the issue of inequality in power relations among the races (Dhruvarajan, 2001).

Plural societies are composed of a number of cultural groups who come into contact in various ways, within a larger national framework. A related term, *multiculturalism*, refers to the scenario where a plural society is valued by the general population, cultural groups, and by government policy. Canada had initially favoured an assimilation strategy, where individuals are encouraged not to maintain their culture but adapt to the dominant one; however, this eventually changed as they realized that this strategy was not successful in other nations and was impractical. As a result, in 1971, the federal government declared a multiculturalism policy, aimed at creating a national unity founded on confidence and value in one’s own individual culture and respect for other cultures (Berry, Poortinga, Segall, & Dasen, 1992). Thus, in the spirit of promoting this goal, the Employment Equity Act was created.

Using a framework developed by Delpit (1995), Kalyanpur and Harry (1997) outline three levels of cultural awareness: overt, where the level of cultural awareness is manifested in obvious differences among individuals, such as language or dress; covert, which involves an awareness of non-visible cultural differences among people, such as parameters of status and interpersonal communication styles; and subtle, which includes the recognition of values and beliefs that are taken for granted and are assumed to be universal, and are largely unidentifiable by others or those within the cultural groups. Legislation, such as Employment Equity and the Canadian Human Rights Act, has been able to address the overt types of discrimination in Canada; but it is the more covert and subtle levels of potential discrimination that is difficult to address, and could be the type of discrimination that lay within the use of competencies in organizations. Little is known about the origins or bases upon which competencies were developed, and even less is known about the potential impact of competencies on the less visible levels of discrimination.

**Competencies in Organizations**

Little has been written in academic journals about the use of competencies in the workplace (Maurer, Wrenn, Pierce, Tross & Collins, 2003). Competency development is an area which seems to have advanced further in practice than in theory (Maurer et al., 2003; Mirabile, 1997). Examples of the development and use of competencies for selection, development, performance appraisal, etc. can be seen in various organizations (Tien, Ven & Chou, 2003); in fact, a survey of 219 Canadian organizations by the Conference Board of Canada found that 45 per cent of participating firms incorporated a *competency framework* (a list or group of competencies) for training and development activities, and a substantial number used it for selection, compensation, and performance management programs (Souque, 1996).

Arriving at a single definition of a *competency* has been debated for years (Drejer, 2002; Mirabile, 1997; Tien et al., 2003). The little research that does exist describes competencies as a being cognitive, learned and behavioural in nature (Mirabile, 1997; Tien et al., 2003; Weinert, 1999). Some definitions include motives, values and beliefs (Mirabile, 1997). The emphasis on competencies in the workplace has implications for the way that work is currently designed in organizations. Lawler III (1994) posits that the fundamental building block in organizations should be the individual, not the job, in order to match the current trend towards competency-based organizations. This in itself raises numerous research issues around how employees and job candidates must equip themselves to participate in firms that employ this perspective of work organization (Lawler III, 1994). This trend towards the widespread use of “competency modeling” has caused much confusion, ambiguity and inconsistency among HR researchers, practitioners and organizations (Shippmann, Ash, Battista, Carr, Eyde, Hesketh et al., 2000).
There are thus numerous examples and definitions of competencies that are employed in firms worldwide. A study published by the American Department of Labour and the American Society for Training and Development revealed the main competencies that American employers found desirable in workers; they included skills such as adaptability, personal development, group effectiveness and influential skills. Other common competencies identified include helping others to learn, serving customers, participation, independent thinking (initiative), human relations, communication and sharing information, teamwork and cooperation, organizational commitment, building relationships and problem solving (Getting managers to lead safety, 2002; Goldstein., 2001; HayGroup, 1999; Tien et al., 2003; Warech, 2002). Some researchers and practitioners consider competencies to be “soft skills” (Hogg, 1993; Hunt, 2002), many of which are characteristic of higher-paying, managerial types of jobs. In addition, one can see an obvious connection between such skills, and organizational citizenship behaviours.

Organizational Citizenship Behaviour

Even after almost a century of the formal study of organizational and workers, job performance has been a rather elusive construct to define in the industrial and organizational psychology literature (Werner, 2000), despite the centrality of it to management research. Over the past fifteen years or so, the study of organizational citizenship behaviours (OCB) has become one of the most widely examined areas in the industrial-organizational psychology and personnel literature (Borman & Penner, 2001; Haworth & Levy, 2001; Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 1997; Van Dyne, Graham & DiNesec, 1994), with a particularly strong focus on attempting to identify the various antecedents of OCB’s (Bettencourt, Gwinner & Meuter, 2001; Rioux & Penner; 2001; LePine, Erez & Johnson, 2002; Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 1997). The great interest in the topic has stemmed from a belief that organizational effectiveness can be improved through such behaviours; indeed, this has been demonstrated empirically (Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 1997).

Organizational citizenship behaviours have been defined by Organ as “individual behaviour that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization” (Organ, 1988, p. 4). According to this definition, such behaviours are not enforceable requirements of the job, and therefore job incumbents cannot be punished if such behaviours are not exhibited (Organ, 1988). While in theory this tenet of OCBs may hold true, in practice, assisted by the recent popularity of competency modeling, OCBs are being demanded more and more on the job, and many are slowly becoming “in-role” requirements (Werner, 2000). The distinction between in-role and extra-role behaviours is becoming blurred (Kidder & McLean Parks, 2001; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Pain & Bachrach, 2000). Over the years, this type of performance has been identified as a multidimensional construct (Coleman & Borman, 2000; Podsakoff et al., 2000), which includes the following seven dimensions of performance: helping behaviour (Graham, 1989; Organ, 1988; Williams & Anderson, 1991); civic virtue (Graham, 1986); organizational compliance (George & Brief, 1992); organizational loyalty; sportsmanship; individual initiative; and self development. Many of these themes overlap with the common competencies demanded by firms and promoted by consultants. Thus, because OCBs are becoming a perceived requirement for a number of jobs by various employers, it is important and urgent to identify what impact these OCBs may have on the employment situation of Canadians with diverse cultural backgrounds in the workplace

Dimensions of OCB

In their 2000 review of the OCB literature to date, Podsakoff and his colleagues found that there had been nearly 30 different types and aspects of citizenship behaviour discussed (Podsakoff et al., 2000). After analyzing these differing OCB facets, they found that many of them overlapped conceptually; however, they were able to organize these facets into seven common dimensions: helping behaviour,
sportsmanship, organizational loyalty, organizational compliance, individual initiative, civic virtue, and self development. Coleman and Borman (2000) found that three broad categories emerged in their analysis of the conceptual domain of citizenship performance: interpersonal citizenship performance, organizational citizenship performance, and job/task conscientiousness. These three categories encompass the seven dimensions as identified by Podsakoff et al. (2000) within them.

It is clear from the numerous attempts to define the conceptual base of citizenship behaviours that there are many categories and sub-categories that overlap. However, on a broad level, there seems to be a common theme among these taxonomies that emerges from these attempts; citizenship behaviours can be classified into categories that are aimed at two different beneficiaries: to individuals, and to the organization as a whole. These two core dimensions are similar to those uncovered by Smith, Organ and Near (1983) (altruism and generalized compliance), and Williams and Anderson (1991) (OCB-I and OCB-O). It seems that while there has been considerable investigation into developing smaller sub-categories of OCB, these two wider categories tend to emerge consistently. OCB-O and OCB-I are important when talking about the potential of cultural conditioning on work behaviours. OCB-O involves behaviours that help the organization as a whole, and OCB-I contains behaviours that “immediately benefit” other specific individuals, that indirectly and ultimately benefits the organization. These dimensions are preferable to altruism and generalized compliance, as they can be restrictive in terms of expected rewards/punishment (while OCB-I and OCB-O do not imply rewards or punishment to the person displaying those behaviours) (Williams & Anderson, 1991).

**The Link Between Competencies in Practice and OCBs**

What is important to understand, is that competencies and competency modeling are becoming widely advocated by organizational consultants and consulting firms, and is used and implemented by a variety of organizations. It is thus interesting is to note the link between many of the competencies identified by organizations, and the similarities to aspects of organizational citizenship behaviours. This link has not been made in the literature; it is extremely important to see that while organizations may not explicitly demand organizational citizenship behaviours within their firms, they are indirectly requiring such behaviours of their employees through the development of competency models and frameworks. A case can be made for this to translate into preferential treatment for certain cultural groups, and discriminatory treatment for other cultural groups, in a work setting. In such cases, this reliance on behaviours in the workplace can be especially problematic in Canadian society, where diversity and multiculturalism are embraced socially and enforced legally, and equal opportunity in the “economic, social, cultural and political life” is emphasized for all individuals in Canada (Canadian Multiculturalism Act, 1985; Eliminating Racial Discrimination in Canada, 1989). This link is clear example of the need to bridge theory and practice in HR research.

Multiculturalism and diversity in the workplace is a complex issue (Ferris, Hochwarter, Buckley, Harrell-Cook & Frink, 1999; Greenwood, 1994). Businesses operate with certain traditions and standards, while employees bring customs, beliefs, and values from a variety of different cultures and backgrounds. The question, then, is who must adjust? Are individuals to sacrifice, hide and change their cultural behaviours to conform to what is perceived to be important to organizations (Greenwood, 1994)? For example, would the inability of an Islamic female to shake hands upon entering a room of business people be considered “uncooperative” and not conducive to “relationship-building”? Is a person from an Asian background who does not make eye contact nor challenges authority considered to be lacking “initiative”? Should people from these backgrounds, in essence, be penalized for what they have learned and understood to be acceptable during their early years of socialization (Greenwood, 1994)? Communication styles vary from culture to culture, and misunderstandings can occur among individuals from different cultures (Sanchez-Burks, Lee, Choi, Nisbett, Zhao & Koo, 2003). The use of
competencies and OCBs in a variety of environments can even take on varying meanings depending on an individual’s cultural background.

Culture and OCB: What do We Know?

Culture

Culture is our worldview. We are inseparable from our culture; it is internalized within us in such a way that we are often unaware of how it envelops us (Kalyanpur & Harry, 1997). Culture is a multifaceted phenomenon (Ting-Toomey, 1999), which includes a wide range of factors in its definition (Verhoeven, 2000). Culture encompasses a set of social norms and responses that condition people’s behaviour (Rodrigues, 1997). It provides the systems of standards of groups for perceiving, believing, evaluating, and acting (Goudenough, 1981). The term “culture”, under the anthropological view, is applied to the total shared, learned behaviour of a society or subgroup (Darlington, 1996; Mead, 1953/2000).

Culture has been compared to an iceberg, where the deeper layers of beliefs, values, norms, etc. are hidden from general view, while the uppermost layers of cultural artifacts, such as rituals, pop culture, etc., are what are seen by others (Berry, Poortinga, Segall & Dasen, 1992; Ting-Toomey, 1999). It is thus important that managers and organizations understand that the behaviours they observe in the workforce, may have considerable influence from cultural norms which develop in different societies. Cultural norms refer to the expectations of what represents proper and improper behaviour in a given situation within a society (Olsen, 1978). Cultural beliefs and cultural norms are generally invisible as they are ‘hidden’ beneath the surface; however, norms and beliefs can be inferred and observed through their manifestation in behaviours (Ting-Toomey, 1999).

Researchers are beginning to ask whether individuals’ behaviour can be affected by cultural conditioning (Adler, 1989; Hofstede, 1980). People from different countries and cultures may differ in attitudes, thoughts, and behaviours (Lam, Hui & Law, 1999). From the above discussion of the definitions of culture and related terms, one can see that culture can dramatically shape an individual’s behaviour. Culture has been cited as the most important factor in determining attributional patterns for success and failure (Tuss, Zimmer & Ho, 1995). It is not merely individual psychological traits that can determine how a person acts, but his/her upbringing within his/her family/group member unit, influenced by the greater environment around that individual. This socialization is posited to influence what are considered to be valued behaviours and attitudes, particularly within the workplace.

There are a variety of models of national culture that exist in the organizational literature (Morden, 1999). One of the most cited frameworks in cross-cultural research is Hofstede’s (1980) dimensions of national culture (Rodrigues, 1998). Based on an extensive study of IBM employees in 40 nations, he found four (and later added a fifth) dimensions of different values that stood out among people from different countries. It can be found in recent OCB and other research (cf. Chhokar, Zhuplev, Fok & Hartman, 2001; Naumov & Puffer, 2000). The four main dimensions are individualism/collectivism, the degree to which individuals are self-oriented and focus on individual achievement and initiative (Hofstede, 1980); masculinity/femininity, the degree of assertiveness or nurturance that dominates a particular country (Hofstede, 1980); uncertainty avoidance, or how comfortable people are with dealing with uncertainty with the future and the unknown (Hofstede, 1980; Morden, 1999); and power distance, the degree to which a culture accepts the inequality of power (Chhokar al., 2001). Hofstede (1993) cautions that these dimensions, like the concept of culture itself, are constructs that do not necessarily “exist”; they can, however, be helpful and useful in predicting other types of “observable and measurable verbal and non-verbal behaviour”.


OCB in Different Cultures

A number of studies only evaluate OCBs in a single non-Western culture, often that of an Asian national culture, (see Farh, Earley & Lin, 1997; Kuehn & Al-Busaidi, 2002; O’Connell, Doverspike, Norris-Watts & Hattrup, 2001; Wong, Wong & Ngo, 2002). Others discuss collectivism and individualism as within-culture individual differences and their effects on OCB (Moorman & Blakely, 1995; Van Dyne, Vandewalle, Kostova, Latham & Cummings, 2000). One major study on demographic dissimilarity and OCBs used surface-level characteristics of individuals in work groups to measure individual differences (Chattopadhyay, 1999). Perceptions can play a significant role in the exhibition of organizational citizenship behaviours, and a couple of studies looked at differing kinds of perceptions that may have an impact on OCBs (Chhokar et al., 2001; Ensher et al., 2001). Finally, other studies evaluate the presence and structure of OCB in different countries (Hui, Law & Chen, 1999; Lam et al., 1999; Paine & Organ, 2000; Perlow & Weeks, 2002; Turnipseed & Murkison, 2000; Van Dyne & Ang, 1998).

Over the past twenty-year history and popularity of OCB investigation in the organizational behaviour and I/O psychology literature, the above types of analyses generally represent the array of studies that have been done relating culture to OCB. Not an overwhelming amount of conclusions can be drawn from them except for this: OCB definition and exhibition can vary in different nations, and can have differential effects on job performance. In addition to culture dimensions, antecedents of OCB can include extraneous political and socioeconomic factors that differ from country to country (and culture to culture), and are taken into account in some studies (while ignored in others).

The Theoretical Explanation for these Conclusions

One common element to most cultural studies in the HR/OB literature is that they are devoid of theory to explain cultural differences. Sociocultural theory, initially developed by Vygotsky (1934/1986), and furthered by Wertsch (1998), can be used to understand the differences in OCBs among cultures. This theory asserts that learning is embedded within social events and occurs as a child interacts with people, objects, and events in the environment (Vygotsky, 1934/1986). Vygotsky argues that one’s development cannot be understood merely by a study of the individual, but also by examining the external social world in which that individual life has developed, through participation in activities that require cognitive and communicative functions. Thus, this theory views learning as situated within interrelated historical, cultural, institutional and communicative processes, as individuals are necessarily cultural beings embedded within a matrix of social relationships and processes (Lim & Rensaw, 2001).

It is thus a very serious error to ignore cultural background, experiences, rituals, etc. when examining behaviours as a criterion measure. This is a particular concern in the case where behaviours are used as measures of job performance, because of the implications for promotion, salary increases, and other benefits in a work setting as a result of performance. Any measure of performance that relies on behaviours generally assumes that each individual’s upbringing and context over the previous several years of their lives are identical in some way, that they are all capable of exhibiting the “desired” behaviours, and equally value such behaviours. Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory essentially dispels this assumption, and emphasizes that behaviours are manifestations of years of cultural conditioning. This may then have implications for the effects of culture on the display of OCBS, as well as for the potential effects of acculturation and gender orientation on these behaviours.

A Unique Diversity Factor: Acculturation
What changes a simple cross-cultural analysis to a diversity initiative is the potential and degree of acculturation that workers experience. The process of acculturation entails changes in behaviours, values, attitudes and abilities of an individual (Berry, 1992; McMillan & Lopez, 2000). This change in individuals’ behaviour comes about through continuous and first-hand contact with others in different cultures (McMillan & Lopez, 2000).

The concept of acculturation has been discussed widely in cross-cultural psychology (Berry, 1997), but not as much in HRM or OB literature to nearly the same extent. Individuals may adapt in different ways to these changes, and the term *psychological acculturation* is applied to this process, which refers to changes that individuals undergo as a result of contact with other cultures and within the process of acculturation that his/her cultural group is experiencing (Graves, 1967). However little organizational research has explicitly addressed how individual socialization outside of organizational efforts has impacted individual behaviour. Cultural convergence theory can be used to support the acculturation processes of various cultures in Canada. The convergence hypothesis asserts that individuals will embrace common attitudes and beliefs, despite cultural differences, through the imperatives of industrialization and economic development (Dunphy, 1987; Sparrow, Schuler & Jackson, 1994; Tan, 2002). Differing levels of acculturation will likely have implications on diverse workers who must experience the use of competencies in the workplace.

**Propositions**

The following, then, is a list of potential relationships between the culture dimensions described above and the OCB dimensions of OCB-I and OCB-O. Acculturation is posited to have a moderating effect on these relationships, as it will affect the strength of the relationships outlined.

**Individualism/Collectivism**

The level of individualism/collectivism in a nation will have an impact on a member’s reasons for complying with organizational requirements (Hofstede, 1980). People who are identified as individualists are seen to be self-oriented, and place more of an emphasis on individual efforts (Chhokar et al., 2001). Those who are more collectivistic as a result of their background, according to sociocultural theory, are more likely to show more OCBs that are oriented toward the organization because of their concern for the larger entity over their individual needs. In addition, those individuals who come from collectivistic cultures are more likely to help other individuals since they have traditionally felt the obligation to put the close members’ needs over their own.

P1a: *There will be a positive relationship between collectivism and OCB-I.*

P1b: *There will be a positive relationship between collectivism and OCB-O.*

Those individuals who come from countries that are more collectivistic, but have acculturated themselves into Canadian society, are not as likely to demonstrate these behaviours. According to convergence theory (Dunphy, 1987; Sparrow et al., 1994), those who have acculturated to Canadian life will embrace the more common attitudes and beliefs in line with Canadian society; therefore:

P1c,d: *The relationships between collectivism and OCB-I and OCB-O will be moderated by acculturation.*

**Masculinity/Femininity**

Masculinity in Hofstede’s (1980) framework looks at the degree to which typical masculine values within a national culture are embraced, such as assertiveness, paternalism, and low concern for
others (Hofstede, 1994; Roberson & Hoffman, 2000). Sociocultural theory would hypothesize then that since OCBs are related to issues of interpersonal relationships and helping others, individuals from more feminine cultures are more likely to demonstrate OCB-I behaviours because they are typically socialized to have a more nurturing attitude than masculine cultures. This same argument can be made for OCB-O, as social interdependence and affiliation are valued aspects of feminine societies.

P2a: There will be a positive relationship between feminine cultures and OCB-I.

P2b: There will be a positive relationship between feminine cultures and OCB-O.

Convergence theory generally holds that those individuals who come from extremely masculine societies but are acculturated into Canadian society may be more likely to demonstrate both OCB-O and OCB-I. Conversely, those who come from more feminine societies and are acculturated into Canadian society may be less likely to exhibit either type of citizenship behaviour.

P2c,d: The relationship between femininity and OCB-I and OCB-O will be moderated by acculturation.

Uncertainty Avoidance

Those who score high on uncertainty avoidance prefer structured situations to those who score low on this dimension (Peterson et al., 1995). Those who have high levels of uncertainty avoidance are less tolerant of ambiguity, and they will likely make efforts to clarify their situations as best as they can and work hard and diligently to ensure their future. Therefore, through the premises of sociocultural theory, they are more likely to stick to themselves and not “waste” time by engaging in social and personal relationships. This leads to the following hypothesis:

P3a: There is a negative relationship between uncertainty avoidance and OCB-I.

However, those individuals in high uncertainty avoidance cultures are always looking for ways to impose structure on ill-structured or ill-defined situations (Hofstede, 1980, 2001). Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) discusses how unspecified obligations may help such individuals accomplish this. Social exchange refers to “voluntary actions of individuals that are motivated by the returns they are expected to bring and typically do in fact bring from others” (Blau, 1964, p. 91). Combined with sociocultural theory, one can then hypothesize that engaging in behaviours that are beneficial to the larger work unit would attempt to reduce one’s ambiguities related to security within the team, overall work performance, etc, as the individual now knows what is expected of him/her thorough such actions.

P3b: There will be a positive relationship between uncertainty avoidance and OCB-O.

Convergence theory would posit that acculturating to Canadian society may cause typically high uncertainty-avoidance individuals to be less risk averse, and they may choose to display more interpersonal citizenship behaviours, and may choose to display less organizationally-oriented citizenship behaviours.

P3c,d: The relationships between uncertainty avoidance and OCB-I and OCB-O will be moderated by acculturation.

Power Distance

Societies with high levels of power distance accept the power hierarchy, and those with less power are expected to accept the fact that power is unequally distributed (Tsui & Windsor, 2001). Individuals in such cultures place a high value on conformity, and close supervision is valued (Chhokar et al., 2001). Sociocultural theory then posits, again, that the focus for individuals in high power distance societies is more likely to be on getting one’s own work done, avoiding idle chit-chat, and emphasizing their own work over fostering personal relationships. Therefore:

P4a: There will be a negative relationship between power distance and OCB-I.
Power distance, however, may result in a different outcome on OCB-O. Those who value conformity and power inequality are likely to be respectful of the larger work unit, its rules, norms, and its overall well-being. Focusing once again on Blau’s (1964) social exchange theory and sociocultural theory, exhibiting behaviours that demonstrate adherence to the rules of the larger work unit and contributing to the team as a whole will help to maintain order, preserve any hierarchy that is in place, and assure these individuals of their continued employment and value to the team since they have determined “their place” within it.

P4b: There will be a positive relationship between power distance and OCB-O.

Similar to the previous relationships for the other cultural dimensions, acculturation to the Canadian society and norms may decrease (or strengthen, for the few countries that are lower in power distance scores than Canada) this relationship. Convergence theory will generally propose that those who come from high power distance cultures may display OCB-I and less OCB-O behaviours because of their acculturation to Canadian society.

P4c,d: The relationships between power distance and OCB-I and OCB-O will be moderated by acculturation.

A more detailed depiction of the initial model is shown below in Figure 1.

![Figure 1. Proposed Model of Culture-OCB Propositions](image-url)
There is little organizational research that examines the heterogeneity among minority groups (Battu & Sloane, 2002). Research on race, particularly with respect to organizations, has tended to ignore differences among the minority groups, and in many research articles, minority groups other than blacks are totally ignored altogether (Cox & Nkomo, 1990). Thus, this paper aims to go beyond surface-level diversity to approach a more meaningful view of cultural differences among individuals. Heterogeneity at a surface level involves individual differences that are overt, biological, and are generally easily observable through physical features. Such characteristics include age, sex, and race/ethnicity. At a deep level, heterogeneity involves differences in individuals’ attitudes, beliefs, and values, and these factors are observed through behaviours (Harrison, Price & Bell, 1998). As competencies become a widespread tool to aid HR practitioners in developing selection, training, performance appraisal and other methods, we must ask ourselves why this is occurring, and what potential effects this new approach may have on such a culturally diverse workforce that exists in Canada. It is essential that potential biases be identified, and this paper attempts to develop some potential propositions that may reveal such biases.
References


Maurer, T.J., Wrenn, K.A., Pierce, H.R., Tross, S.A. & Collins, W.C. Beliefs about “improvability” of career-relevant skills: relevance to job/task analysis, competency...


Morden, T. Models of national culture - a management review. *Cross Cultural Management, 6(1)*, 1999, 19-44.


