

Raising culturally-derived awareness and building culturally-appropriate responsibility: The development of the Cross-Cultural Kaleidoscope

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Abstract

This paper proposes that raising culturally-bound awareness and building culturally-appropriate responsibility constitute the essence of good inter-cultural coaching practice. It presents a coaching model that can facilitate this awareness and responsibility building and provides key concepts from the literature review and findings of a qualitative research project that have informed its construction. If cross-cultural coaching becomes an established form of coaching practice, coaches must be cognizant of the dangers of transporting ‘Western’ models of coaching that are biased towards their own cultural lens. It is proposed that the differing values informing constructs such as ‘responsibility’ can change over the lifespan due to multiple and prolonged intercultural experiences and this may require that the coach work with ‘unlearning’ as a key intercultural competency.

Keywords: The Cross-Cultural Kaleidoscope, Cross-cultural Coaching, Global Executive Coaching, Culturally-derived awareness, Culturally-appropriate responsibility

Introduction

How important is it for the coach to have an understanding of a coachee from a different worldview? This question continues to have significance in coaching research that takes place in and amongst multi-cultural societies, workplaces and teams. Hannerz (1992) informs us that societies are becoming increasingly ‘creolised’ and, according to the United Nations Population Fund (2011) 214 million people are living outside of their country of birth. A further 700 million move around inside their home countries.

Some time ago, Schein (1992, p.15) stated that “cultural understanding is desirable for all of us but it is essential for leaders if they are to lead.” Leaders today must be globally minded and capable of developing competencies within a changing, highly complex world. Furthermore, great commercial and reputational benefits may be obtained from a workforce with the skills to operate in a global market; and great risks from one which does not (British Council, 2013). This calls for the creation of more flexible, adaptable and creative teams that are culturally diverse and globally mobile (Pricewaterhouse Cooper, 2010).

Effective global executives operate within a dynamic multicultural environment at individual, team, corporate, national and international levels. The generation and sustenance of international business opportunities and leadership in the face of such complexities represent a key challenge. The coaching relationship, when incorporating culture into the mix, may be seen as a “complex adaptive system,” or CAS (Cavanagh, 2006, p. 315). This approach to coaching takes historic, economic,

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political, social, environmental and educational factors into account as well as the micro approach relating to the individual in the context of their immediate relationships.

Operating globally demands an understanding that there are culturally-bound approaches to many working practices that carry varying levels of importance: time-keeping, influence of authority, communication styles, personal autonomy, respect for processes, adherence to rules, the importance of relationship-building, allegiance to individual or collective goals, team-work and so on. Yet, it is the values and value systems that drive differing work practices that is the point of enquiry at which intercultural consultants, coaches and trainers can have impact (Inkeles and Levinson, 1963; Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1995; Ingelhart *et al.* 1998; Bond *et al.*, 2004).

Yet, the internalisation of culture and the meanings attributed by individuals to cultural values and beliefs have been largely unexplored (Gilbert and Rosinski, 2008). Whilst values are the “brokerage unit” (Hall, 1994) between the internal and external worlds, values can either inform or restrict a person’s behaviour and in addition may change, or need to be changed, over the course of a lifespan or a change of context. This may require the coach to work with the unlearning of cultural values and beliefs that no longer work for the coachee.

The first step in this process is awareness. From awareness cultural meanings may be explored. It is therefore a key proposition of this article that raising culturally-bound awareness and building culturally-appropriate responsibility is the essence of good intercultural coaching. This builds on the work of Whitmore (2002, p. 32) who states that “raising awareness and taking responsibility is the essence of good coaching”. These distinctions of *culturally-bound* awareness and *culturally appropriate* responsibility are important because cultural beliefs, preferences and mandates can otherwise be neglected. Equally important however, is that the coach avoids a perspective that all coaching issues are culturally imbued. As with all coaching engagements, the coachee leads the way. However, given the changes at societal and technological levels and the need for corporations to compete on a global stage, it is at least likely that the context for coaching will be increasingly multi-cultural. It is suggested therefore that it is incumbent on the coach to be able to ‘hold the space’ for the intricacies facing global leaders and their teams.

The Cross-Cultural Kaleidoscope is a model or tool that enables them to hold this space. It examines both the internal meanings of individual cultural values, whilst offering a set of lenses through which to examine the external influences that may affect emotions, thoughts, decisions and behaviours.

In this article I present key concepts from the literature and findings of a qualitative research project that have informed the building of my cross-cultural coaching model. I have categorised my literature findings in sections on ‘cross-cultural coaching’, ‘values and value systems theory’, ‘cultural dimensions’, ‘global leadership’, ‘cultural values and the self’, and ‘systems theory’. I then discuss the path that led to the development of the Kaleidoscope model and present some of the relevant findings from my research project where I collected data through interviews with 10 professional executive coaches with practise experiences in 27 countries, collectively coaching 43 different nationalities. I end with a short section on the application of my model and implications for coaching practice.

Literature Review

Cross-cultural coaching

Rosinski (2003) pioneered a cultural perspective in coaching. Since then, Law *et al.* (2011), Moral and Abbot (2009), Stout Rostron (2009), the Association for Coaching and Passmore (2009), and Shams and Lane (2011) have incorporated a cultural perspective in coaching. Whilst Rosinski

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(2003) offers the cultural orientations framework (COF) and Law *et al.* (2011) propose the adoption of the Universal Integrated Framework (UIF), both of these models to date do not appear to be widely used in coaching practice.

Global leadership

The Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) study (House *et al.*, 2004) focused on culture and leadership in 61 nations. The study took place over several years and identified 6 global leadership dimensions: charismatic/value-based, team-oriented, participative, humane-oriented, autonomous and self-protective.

The questionnaire built on the original work of Hofstede (1980, 2001), Kluckholm and Strodtbeck (1961), McClelland (1985), and Putnam (1993) and explored differences and similarities in global leadership. It found five leadership dimensions that were universally regarded as good leadership attributes: integrity, being inspirational, results-orientation, being visionary and a team orientation. Two dimensions were universally regarded as not being good leadership attributes: self-protectionism or advancement and being unethical. There were six that were found to be culturally contingent: status consciousness, a procedural orientation, being autonomous, humane orientation, taking risks for greater good, and competitiveness.

This study illuminated that leadership is undoubtedly a universal phenomenon, but the *value* that different cultures place on different aspects varies widely. This has been termed Implicit Leadership Theory (ILT) (House *et al.*, 2002). ILT can account for differing leadership styles amongst national cultures and the mis-matched expectations that very often cause misunderstandings. The study therefore concluded that acceptable management practices in one country are not guaranteed to work in another. Moreover, and perhaps more significantly, the study has identified that there are not only differences, but similarities. A skilful coach working with a diverse team can leverage these synergies for increased effectiveness, harmony and competitive advantage.

Values and value systems theory

An examination of values is often a good place to start in coaching. Values are said to be the brokerage unit between a person's external and internal worlds (Hall, 1994). For this reason it is suggested that it is good practice for global executive coaches to familiarise themselves with the theory encompassing cultural values.

During the 1960's, the psychologist Carol Rogers (1964) identified 'operative' or action-oriented preferences and 'conceived' values that have been assimilated from others, in the context of value systems. He did not however appear to consider the impact of culture as a distinct feature. The psychologist Rokeach (1973) conducted a cross-cultural study of values and value systems. He classified 'terminal' goals and aspirations and 'instrumental' moral and competence values and found that "culture, society, and personality are the major antecedents of values and that attitudes and behaviour are their major consequence" (p. 326).

The social psychologist Schwartz' (1995) Value Survey (SVS) identified 56 values and by 1995 had surveyed 25,000 people in 40 countries, along with his 50 collaborators. Seven cultural value orientations and ten individual motivational value types were identified, in addition to two universal dimensions organising value systems: 'openness to change/conservation' and 'self-transcendence/self-enhancement'. Differing from previous examinations of values, the study separated individual and cultural values for the first time.

The World Values Survey was conducted by a group of social scientists (Inglehart *et al.*, 1998) who measured attitudes, values and beliefs concerning politics, economics, religion, sexual behaviour,

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gender roles, family values and ecological concerns. The study took place amongst 40 societies, representing 70% of the population. Two dimensions were identified in 1997: 'traditional/secular-rational' and 'survival/well-being'. Focused on the effects of cultural change, Inglehart suggested that survival values shift towards self-expression values as societies develop economically and identified new values including tolerance, respect for diversity and the environment and interpersonal trust.

According to Bond *et al.* (2004, p.553), "social axioms are generalised beliefs about oneself, the social and physical environment, or the spiritual world." Social axioms incorporate individual responses within cultures and are an assertion about the association between two entities. The research found two new dimensions: 'dynamic externality' and 'societal cynicism', reflecting survival instincts in societies characterised by poverty in the former and the disruptive effects of social, political and economic change in the latter.

Despite the enormous contribution to intercultural theory, these studies based on values and values systems have had seemingly relatively little impact in the workplace. Yet, as Hofstede (2001, p.10) suggests: "systems of values are a core element of culture."

A common thread amongst these studies appears to be the changing nature of the value systems that occur as societies change. This is apparent in China at the moment as the younger generation enjoy unprecedented growth and wealth that may be at odds with the traditional value sets of the older generation. This means that leaders of global organisations need to keep abreast of the changing nature of the markets in which they operate. Yet, according to Schein (1992, p.361) "culture is a stabilizer, a conservative force, a way of making things predictable." Schein points to the paradox of the need for leaders to be perpetual learners about the impact of culture whilst their own culture is often contributing to the very decisions they make, thereby informing an organisation's culture. This illuminates the complexities of practicing interculturality and of the need for leadership approaches that are simultaneously grounded yet emergent, along with models that accommodate the consequences of this.

Cultural dimensions

The studies of culture that continue to have influence in the workplace involved large scale quantitative studies that have resulted in categorisations of cultural norms or cultural dimensions. However, they typically do not address the meaning that an individual ascribes to membership of a particular culture. Most large-scale research programmes inform the coach of the *tendencies* of groups of people. Whilst personal values may be said to be unique, those held collectively produce a "*habitus*, a system of permanent and transferable tendencies," (Hofstede 2001, p.4). However, knowledge of cultural dimensions may inform the coaching relationship. It can be useful to understand the culturally-bound responses of national groups, such as the tendency of Asians to avoid saying 'no', the German adherence to strict time-keeping, or the Spanish need to socialise before business.

Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) were among the first anthropologists to define universal dimensions of culture. In addition to human-nature they classified differences in relation to nature, human relationships, activity and time. The sociologists Inkeles and Levinson (1963) adopted a systems approach to the integration of the personality and the socio-cultural environment. They looked for universal characteristics of a mature person along with common socio-cultural characteristics of societies and identified 'relation to authority', 'conception of self' and 'common conflicts and their resolution'.

The work of Hofstede (1980) is perhaps still the most referenced in the workplace. By means of a cross-cultural quantitative survey, he measured work-related value differences between IBM

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subsidiaries in 40 countries. He initially identified four cultural dimensions measuring the intensity and direction of values on a linear axis: 'individualism/collectivism' 'masculinity/femininity' 'power-distance'; and 'uncertainty-avoidance'.

Of all the Hofstede dimensions, perhaps the most widely understood is individualism/collectivism. Hofstede (2001, p.211) suggests that "it is closely linked to a country's level of economic development," therefore nations may exhibit greater individualism as they modernise. Triandis (2001) expresses this as being open to new experiences, independence and feeling in control. Coaching, having emerged from an individualistic culture, the USA, has a tendency towards goal and performance-oriented coaching processes in the workplace, perhaps originating from management by objectives (MBO's) (Drucker, 1954). This may not be applicable in cultures placing greater value on the success or well-being of the group, such as China. Furthermore, as the social behaviours, thought patterns and communication styles between individualistic and collectivist cultures differ greatly (Fisher, 1998), this potentially causes misunderstandings that could be presented as issues in the coaching engagement.

The masculine/feminine dimension explores the emotional and social roles of the genders. Cultures which are feminine in orientation, such as Sweden, Norway and the Netherlands, tend to emphasise relationships, environment, co-operation and benevolence. A so-called masculine society on the other hand, such as Japan, the USA and the UK puts more emphasis on competition, achievement and advancement. These tendencies are likely to be reflected in the approaches an executive may have to, for example, decision-making and team-work.

The importance of power-distance may affect the degree of non-directional influence the coach is able to exercise when deference to authority is prevalent in a society demonstrating a high power distance indicator (PDI), such as China. It will also reveal the extent to which employees will demonstrate autonomy or refrain from taking responsibility. A low PDI score will indicate an egalitarian approach to decision-making where it is expected that authority should be challenged or at least questioned by subordinates. It also perhaps provides an explanation for the need for the coach to, at times, be more directive when engaging with people from high PDI countries (Nangalia and Nangalia, 2010)

The uncertainty-avoidance dimension helps with an understanding of the cultural values associated with attitudes to difference. Those scoring high on the Uncertainty Avoidance Indicator (UAI) tended to view difference as dangerous and those scoring low tended towards viewing it as interesting. Those with a high UAI such as Belgium or France could exhibit anxiety-related behaviour such as prejudice, traditionalism, superstition and an intolerance of ambiguity. They may therefore expect others to adhere to the rules upholding these traditions. In business this could translate into dictatorial leadership styles and an over reliance on contractual terms and conditions. Low UAI societies, such as the United Kingdom, feel comfortable with ambiguity and consequently able to influence their own lives and those of their superiors or authorities. They may be more willing to take risks. Coaching could serve as a gateway to the exploration of emotions behind these values and of the impact of resulting behaviour upon co-workers.

After Hofstede (1980), Bond (1983) conducted the Chinese Value Survey that culminated in a fifth dimension: 'long-term versus short-term orientation'. A long-term orientation is focused towards future rewards whereas the short-term orientation is related to the immediate past or the instant gratification of the present. This dimension incorporated questions that reflected values such as filial piety, respect for tradition, unequal status in relationships, shame and thrift and reflect an 'Eastern' mindset previously unattended to in the original Hofstede studies.

A sixth dimension, 'indulgence vs. self-restraint' was added (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010) which refers to a society that puts little restraint upon the human need to enjoy life and have fun, compared with one that suppresses such a need and has developed social norms to restrict it. For example, the optimism of people from the USA, or the emphasis upon a social life in the UK may contrast sharply with viewing smiling as suspect in Russia or a lack of freedom of speech in communist China.

Others who have greatly contributed to the theory of cultural dimensions include Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997). Following 15 years of research they identified seven cultural dimensions concerning the individual and the group (individualism/communitarianism), relationships and rules (universalism/particularism), status (achievement/ascription), relationships to nature (inner/outer directedness) and time (sequential/ synchronic), involvement (diffuse/specific) and emotional expression (affective/neutral). They criticise Hofstede's linear approach, explaining that cultures 'dance' in circles and generate new meanings from otherwise opposing values.

Impact of cultural values on the self

A person's values can be restrictive, potentially being the source of limiting core beliefs (Ellis & Harper, 1997). These can be expressed as culturally-mandated imperatives such as 'shoulds' and 'oughts'. Trilling (1955, p.xiv) draws a comparison of culture, when expressed as a custom or mandate, to a prison, suggesting that it "lies like a weight" upon the prison house. Hall (1959, p.182) argues "it is in fact a prison unless one knows that there is a key to unlock it." Furthermore, Hofstede (2001, p.18) explains that identifying culture-related behaviour is difficult. He states, "it takes a prolonged stay abroad and mixing with other nationals there for us to recognise the numerous and often subtle differences in the ways they and we behave, because that is how our society has programmed us." This is because much of our cultural values and beliefs are held sub-consciously and it can therefore be incumbent on the cross-cultural coach to surface them. According to Hall (1959, p.29) "culture hides more than it reveals and what it hides, it hides most effectively from its own participants." This means that the coach must be aware of the risk of making assumptions that are made from his or her own cultural lens. These acknowledgements can provide the coach with fertile ground for exploration as he or she seeks to raise culturally-derived awareness, of both the client and his or her self. This can also mean that a coach from a different culture to the coachee can be a useful counterpart in the surfacing of differences. Whereas a coach from the same culture may not have the awareness of how the differences are causing misunderstandings or issues and could therefore, unwittingly, be in danger of colluding with the coachee.

Yet, as identified in the literature search, there is still relatively little understanding pertaining to the internalisation of culture and the meanings attributed by individuals to cultural values and beliefs (Gilbert and Rosinski, 2008). Working with awareness in the coaching relationship seems to be the crossroads where culture and diverse streams of psychology including cross-cultural psychology, cultural psychology, social psychology and more recently, positive psychology along with social science and transcultural counselling and psychotherapy can meet. From awareness cultural meanings may be explored: "awareness is where it all starts" (Hofstede 2003, p.230).

Thus, it may be perceived from a review of the cultural literature that there are certain tendencies exhibited by people from different cultures that are typically translated into cultural norms. However, cultures are constantly changing, which in turn means that cultural norms change. This makes it difficult to take an enduring view on a person from a given culture. Furthermore, as individuals we are poorly aware of our own cultural influences. Raising these to awareness in the coaching relationship would help to illuminate to what extent our culture influences our emotions, thoughts and behaviours and how aspects from association with our *past* cultural groups may impact us now in the present. It also helps with understanding the perspective of 'the other', especially when we are able to 'stand in the other's shoes'.

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The relevance of systems

According to Moran *et al.* (2007, p.10), “culture is a complex system of interrelated parts that must be understood holistically.” A complex adaptive system (CAS) is a system that has a large number of ‘agents’ that interact, learn and are adaptive (Holland, 2006). An example of such is the immune system, where a change in one part of the system can affect the entire system. A multi-national organisation characterised by global matrix structures and agile teams may be seen to fit these descriptions. In taking a systems perspective, it is therefore incumbent upon the coach to refrain from looking at culture from an ‘either/or’ paradigm as is the tendency when adhering to a model of culture based upon linear dimensions. Holding the complexity of sometimes opposing values and therefore taking a ‘both/and’ perspective may require some advanced skills and a willingness to consider the context within which the executive operates, although should come relatively naturally to coaches coaching from an appreciative enquiry perspective (e.g. Orem *et al.* 2007).

Furthermore, Holland (2006) suggests that through adaption, innovation emerges. Adaptation often requires the redefinition of boundaries and adjustment to the environment; whether that may be political, economic, historic or cultural, or all of the above and more. Therefore, captains of industry need to find ‘lever points’ or key areas of influence in the corporate system. Once found, a coach can be instrumental in facilitating a leadership approach to complexity that seeks to *both* build upon established techniques *and* to develop new ways of doing things.

Thus, it may be seen that a systems approach incorporates the context in which senior leaders operate. It also reflects the complexity of the global environment and the consequent need for agility, adaptability and emergent solutions.

The Cross-Cultural Kaleidoscope Development

The Cross-Cultural Kaleidoscope model emerged from a research study “Toward Greater Cultural Understanding in Coaching” (Plaister-Ten 2009). The literature review served as a guide and illuminated the need to approach coaching global leaders and inter-cultural teams from a systems perspective. This takes into account cultural theory and norms whilst acknowledging that our culture has distinct meanings for individuals. As an Interpretative Phenomenological Approach (IPA) was utilised, continued references to literature contributed to the formation of the model.

The model grew from the stories that the research participants shared about their experiences of coaching in a multi-cultural context. The sample consisted of 10 professional executive coaches; practising in 27 countries who had collectively coached 43 different nationalities and represented more than 20,000 coaching hours across all the continents of the world.

Themes were categorised in the areas of history/arts, economic, political, education, legal, religious/spiritual, community (including organisation culture)/family, geography/climate, with impact from cultural norms and diversity (largely gender and age). A systems approach is represented through the lenses of the Kaleidoscope model. The outer lenses represent those external aspects that might affect cultural value systems. As such they reflect a collective allegiance and simultaneously contribute to the formation of cultural norms. On the other hand, the inner lenses represent an individual’s inner world. This includes individual personality, emotions, thoughts, values and beliefs that impact a person’s individual cultural values and contribute towards the concept of the cultural self (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

The cross-cultural kaleidoscope™ A systems approach



The imagery of a Kaleidoscope places the global leader, and consequently his or her coach, in an environment that is dynamic with multiple influences interweaving and interchanging from the external environment. The external environment provides the context and the internal self provides the meaning of all of these influences. There is however, an invitation to hold the image of a Kaleidoscope ‘loosely’ as the coach works with the model. Due to the changing nature of cultures, a person’s boundaries can become blurred and become a complex mix of influences, as illustrated in Figure 2.

The model serves primarily as a guide and as an awareness-building tool. It is important to note that the Kaleidoscope model is not ‘leading with culture’. If there are no cultural issues manifesting in the coaching issue then it is clearly inappropriate to go searching for them. Furthermore, internal and external categorisations are not intended to ‘pigeon-hole’ or stereotype. The Kaleidoscope model – by its very nature – is intended to illuminate the complexity of the cross-cultural landscape. Hall (1994, p.40) suggests that values “carry the energy of the inner world into the outer world.” They serve as a “brokerage unit that assesses information and enables the brain to synthesize it into everyday decision-making.” Thus, the internal and external worlds become inter-woven with values creating the sense-making. This is represented in Figure 3.

The internal lens

The ‘internal’ influences of culture are largely expressed as a form of self-identity and represented by the ‘cultural self’ (or selves) as distinct from personality. As such, the inner part of the Kaleidoscope represents the thoughts, feelings and emotions held by an individual about their own cultural identity. The experiences throughout their lifespan contribute to a shift in this identity, or indeed a need to shift brought about by a change in context such as an expatriate posting, repatriation, or merger with a company from a different national and organisational culture. Furthermore, the global leader attending to the formation of new corporate cultures will be working at the level of emerging new corporate values.

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Figure 2

The cross-cultural kaleidoscope™ A systems approach



Figure 3

The cross-cultural kaleidoscope™ A systems approach



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The external lenses

The 'external' lenses suggest a window through which an issue may be examined and which in turn have a bearing on the thoughts, feelings and decisions that drive behaviour. The following are some examples and excerpts from research that were drawn on during the formation of the external lenses.

The cultural norms lens

Taking a societal-level of enquiry and its impact on the individual can for example, help to identify constructs such as guilt and shame. Research findings suggest that individualistic societies such as the USA reflect a guilt culture, whereas collective societies such as Nepal and China reflect a shame culture (Augsberger, 1986). The Confucian Dynamism influences of the fifth dimension (Hofstede 2001, 2003) reflect the values of persistence and thrift, and a shame culture where relationships are important. This is reflected in the following quotation:

The people in the East have a sense of shame, why they don't want to do something is because truly from their heart it's a sense of shame and not really because of a face issue. They are relationship-based. (Hong Kong Chinese Coach, in mainland China)

The community lens

Examining factors such as family communities for example, can provide some clues as to the levels of social responsibility a person might exhibit. An allegiance to "in groups" and "out groups" (Tajfel and Turner, 2004) is likely to be represented as barriers to inclusion within a particular group. This is reflected in the following quotation from a Canadian Coach talking about her experiences of coaching in Hong Kong:

Family connection is very strong here, once you get outside that barrier you have much less duty to care for people, so there's less kind of civic responsibility in Hong Kong, locally people will dump their garbage in the hallway; Canadians would not do that, (Canadian Coach in Hong Kong)

The religious/spiritual lens

Despite some unease about working with religious issues, coaches in my research project identified that illuminating the religious mandates that were guiding beliefs, and on occasions getting in the way of action, can be very useful as the following quotation illustrates:

...every day on the way home from school she would go and sit in front of Blessed Sacrament to pray or to place herself in the hands of God, or cuddle into the love of God. I worked with her to take a little bit more the reins of her life than just cuddle in the love of God. (French coach in Spain)

The legal/political/education lens

The legal/political environment can also restrict or enable the cognitions, emotions and behaviours of its citizens and in turn impact leadership styles. In those countries where there are very strict rules and harsh punishments, compliancy tends to follow as compared with a system with inconsistent penalties and more 'grey areas' from which to view a situation. This can impact a person's attitude to authority and risk as Hofstede (2003) has already suggested. The following quotation is illustrative of the impact of a strict legal and structured political framework:

I worked in Singapore for a while. There you have people who follow the rule of the law. My coachee did as he was told. (Chinese Coach)

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In countries where the education system is based upon rote learning, there can be a tendency for subordinates to avoid offering up suggestions and ideas when the leader is present. This is largely due to the fact that they have not been taught to do so, but it is also due to the impact of hierarchy and power distance (Hofstede, 1980). This is even more so in highly deferent societies such as China.

I had a coachee – a Brit - who was responsible for managing Chinese people and he just could not understand why they don't take personal accountability. (South African Coach in UK)

The geography/climate lens

In this lens we can refer for example, to Hall's (1966) work on proxemics, where climate, noise level and light can all have a bearing upon how individuals interact with each other, along with cultural rules for space between them. Thus, in densely populated areas such as China or Hong Kong, there is less respect for personal space as compared with for instance the United States or Canada. This has an impact in the workplace; people not only become used to working within a certain office environment, but their status is often attached to it. Think for example about the importance of the 'corner office' to executives from the USA.

When you live in a big country like the United States, you have a lot of space around you, you know even if you live in a small apartment. Where somewhere like Hong Kong, people live on top of each other and they'll bump into you without much respect for your personal space. (American Coach)

The economic lens

Examining the economic structure or structures that a leader is, or has been, influenced by can bring some insights as to how they will lead. In the following excerpt it is suggested that those who are experiencing economically challenging conditions may not demonstrate leadership qualities such as decision-making and planning for the long-term:

Until a few years ago the economy was so uncertain and inflation so high at 200%, so my coachees could not make decisions or simply plan the way. (Austrian Coach in Brazil)

The historic lens

A country's history or a person's personal history brings with it many opportunities to examine the psyche of the person with whom you are engaged as a coach and to the impact this may have made upon their leadership style or ability to be led. Coachees or their families may have been subjected to the effects of for example, the Cultural Revolution in China, slavery in South America or Nazi control in Germany. The following quotation also illustrates the importance of the coach dealing with their own cultural history:

I have had to learn to become comfortable with the history of my country of origin (Nazi Germany) by accepting the shadow self or the hidden sub-cultures of self so that I do not impose this onto my life or the lives of my clients. (German coach in France)

The diversity lens

A diversity lens was added as a revision to the first edition of the Kaleidoscope model in order to accommodate ethnicity, age, gender differences. This was based on feedback from the coaches in the reflective study, such as:

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This model may be used to illustrate issues of diversity, so age, gender and race for example. (French coach in UK)

Applications to coaching practice

Reports on the possible applicability of the cross-cultural Kaleidoscope for intercultural practice were derived from testing in practice amongst the original research sample but also from outside the original sample. The selection criteria continued to be those coaches who were practicing inter-culturally and had at least five years of doing so. A reflective method of feedback was sought following the Subjective, Objective, Analysis and Personal Learning (SOAP) format. A form was sent by email to each participant for review prior to an intercultural coaching session, along with some background information on the Kaleidoscope model. They had the choice as to when and where they would use the model, or not to use it all if it was not appropriate to do so. Each participant then conducted a coaching session using the model and after reflection the form was either sent back to me, or I listened to their feedback over the phone or in person where practical.

The questions asked on the form were as follows:

- *Subjective account*: what were your feelings/perceptions of using the tool
- *Objective account*: how was it used, how easy/difficult was it to use and what was the outcome
- *Analysis of the experience*: how useful/not useful do you think this tool would be to you in your coaching practice?
- *Personal learning*: did you as the coach learn anything as a result of using this tool? What? Did the coachee/mentee learn anything? What?

Below are suggestions for use of the Kaleidoscope model in raising awareness:

- As a visual image for the coach to keep in mind, either before or during the coaching and mentoring relationship in order to alert one's 'antenna' to possible cultural issues (or the cultural impact on the issue)
- As a way to raise awareness of the coach to the impact of culture on his/her beliefs and to the risk of projection in the coaching relationship
- To discuss with the coachee or mentee and use as a basis for exploration either before or during the coaching relationship
- To identify which of the segments or lenses of the Kaleidoscope holds the most resonance for the coachee and which may represent a good starting point for the coaching conversation
- To identify the 'cultural self'/selves – working at the level of cultural identity
- To identify the impact of external influences on leadership styles
- To identify cultural imperatives and conflicting internal values

And some suggestions for use of the Kaleidoscope model in taking responsibility:

- To create culturally-appropriate choice and behavioural change. This means that coaching processes that emphasise choice and options such as the GROW model (Whitmore, 2002) for example, may need to be adapted to accommodate those coachees that are constrained by cultural mandates, such as a lack of assertiveness in deferent societies or strongly-held religious mandates. Similarly when differing cultural values driving leadership and business goals are at odds with an organisational culture, culturally-appropriate responsibility will incorporate an examination of the differing cultural meanings of 'responsibility'. It may also mean that the coach on occasions has to

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change his or her style to accommodate people from cultures where the coach is seen as an expert or a superior. Thus the coach may need to be directional in style in these types of situations.

- To ‘unlearn’ those cultural values that no longer work for the coachee. This means that the coach facilitates the illumination of the different value systems, organisation structures and societies that the coachee has been exposed to during the course of the coachee’s life span. There may be some conflicting and even competing values accumulated during the course of a person’s lifetime that the coach will need to address.

Implications for coaching practice

Knowledge of cultural theories can provide valuable insights to the coach, but it can lead to a tendency to evaluate dimensions on an either/or basis and to ‘sophisticated stereotyping’ (Osland and Bird, 2000). In reality, a person is often a complex mix, exhibiting different traits in different circumstances. It can also cause the psychological impact of culture to be overlooked. Gannon (2001) points out that the UK for example, has a lower degree of emotional expressiveness than the United States, although they score similarly on individualism dimension (Hofstede 2001, 2003). It can therefore be useful to the intercultural coach to form a hypothesis in the coaching relationship about what values their coaches might have. Nevertheless, it is equally as important to bracket this awareness and to hold different cultural values lightly in order to avoid making assumptions and projections.

Developing culturally-derived awareness and building culturally-appropriate responsibility are important considerations. Firstly, culturally-derived awareness takes account of the intercultural differences that may be impacting the coaching *issue*, such as misunderstandings between team members from different countries. Key to this is use of the word *may*. It would clearly be inappropriate to project any intercultural knowledge into the coaching mix. As with any coaching engagement, the coachee leads the way.

Building culturally-appropriate responsibility on the other hand, requires a keen understanding of the fact that not all cultures generate the same level of choice for their members. Those cultures in which religion is a dominant and guiding principle for example, may not present for coaching with the same level of autonomy as individuals where state religion is side-lined. This will undoubtedly affect the ‘options generation’ part of the coaching process. Not only that, responsibility can mean different things to different people. The Chinese value of harmonious relations for example, reflects the importance of self-control contributing to the success of the group. Hofstede *et al.* (2010) further advises that different values lead to differing priorities placed upon business goals, with the Chinese for example, typically placing more importance upon the responsibility to society than the short-term profits. If the coach is not equipped to deal with these differences then it is likely that the coaching relationship will suffer.

The Kaleidoscope Model seeks to provide a tool for the illumination of cultural values and beliefs and simultaneously, to evaluate the impact of the external environment built on a social constructivist approach originally postulated by Vygotsky (1962). As migration persists and globalisation intensifies, more and more people are likely to present for coaching with complex cultural profiles, derived from exposure to multiple cultural influences. The skill of the cross-cultural coach is likely to lie in raising the awareness of culturally-bound responses no longer serving the coachee because of a change of context, such as a move to a new country or workplace. This will invariably involve an element of ‘unlearning’, surely likely to be a key skill for the 21st century coach (Plaister-Ten, 2010). However, unlearning engrained habits that have been in place for many years is difficult. The Cross-Cultural Kaleidoscope may be able to assist with this.

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Conclusion

It is suggested that a key competency for the global executive coach or cross-cultural coach is to work with raising culturally-appropriate awareness and to build culturally-derived responsibility. This proposition stems from empirical research, a literature review and from feedback from intercultural coaches who have tested the Kaleidoscope tool in practice.

The purpose of the Kaleidoscope model is to be a practical tool for global executive coaches who may be grappling with the complexities of a globalised workplace and multi-cultural societies. This can only increase in significance as globalisation persists. An increasing number of people will be exposed to different lifestyles, thought patterns, emotional expressions and behaviour during the course of the lifespan. 'Global nomads' or perpetual expatriates will have experienced wide and varied influences from multiple cultures, often from childhood. As global executive coaches we must be prepared for this.

The additional purpose of this paper is to contribute to building a coach's knowledge of cultural theory and in so doing to avoid the pitfalls of assumptions and stereotyping, but also projection of his or her own culture. Multiple branches of psychology have informed studies of culture, particularly cross-cultural psychology, cultural psychology, social psychology and more recently, positive psychology. However, an overemphasis on cultural theory, particularly the dimensions, can lead to sophisticated stereotyping (Osland and Bird, 2000) and an 'either/or' perspective. This is not useful in an engagement seeking to leverage the strength in diversity that may be derived from a 'both/and' paradigm.

When coaching global leaders, it is incumbent upon the global executive coach to explore the complexity in which the leader operates. The executive is often leading from within a complex adaptive system (CAS). This increases the likelihood of the need for coaching solutions to become emergent. A systems approach to coaching (Cavenagh, 2006) reflects this complexity and provides for the accommodation of otherwise competing or contradictory perspectives. It also means that the Western tools and models that focus on individual goals and outcomes are provided for, but are not at the expense of other cultural values that place an emphasis on the needs of the collective, such as relationships and harmony. Values and value systems are considered to be a good place to start in an intercultural coaching engagement.

It is important to realise that an intercultural approach is not leading with culture. There may be no particular cultural influences that have a bearing on the coaching relationship or context. However, the skill of the coach is required to illuminate any cultural differences that may be residing in the issue, such as communication styles for example.

The Cross-Cultural Kaleidoscope is a coaching tool that has emerged from a combination of theory, research and practice. The research participants informing the Kaleidoscope model came from and practised all over the globe. Its underpinning ethos is that all too often, it is easy to make judgments based on what is manifest. However, underlying the manifestations is a rich tapestry of deeply held cultural values and beliefs that drive behaviour. Some of this behaviour may be hard-wired but no longer serve the coachee and may well be acting against them in their current position or situation. Thus, helping the coachee to 'unlearn' and to take culturally-appropriate responsibility can assist with change.

The reflective feedback received from the coaches using the Kaleidoscope model suggests that the model has value as an awareness-building tool. It has been used as a basis for discussion throughout the coaching session, thus shaping the entire coaching conversation. It may be used either at the beginning, middle or end of a session or as a pre-session tool. It can deepen the strength of the

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relationship, due to the potentially emotional nature of the enquiry it can evoke; thereby delivering to the coach a greater depth of understanding of the coachee.

It has also been used as a tool to raise the self-awareness of the coach to his/her own cultural influences. In so doing the global executive or cross-cultural coach also needs to be mindful to bracket any knowledge or preconceptions before entering the coaching relationship and to hold any opposing cultural values 'lightly'.

As organisations strive to drive their function as social enterprises and to redefine themselves for this era of globalisation they will require solutions that can address paradoxical situations such as simultaneously competing and collaborating. As a result, it is likely that organisations will want to work with coaches that can co-create coaching solutions in the face of such complexity. Tools such as the Kaleidoscope can possibly help, especially in situations when it is necessary to weigh the views of others whose cultural experiences diverge from one's own.

Limitations and recommendations for further research

As with most qualitative research, this study is based upon a relatively small sample; further research on a larger scale would therefore build on the findings. The perspective of the coachee would also be invaluable as their opinions could help to build the model further and make it more useful in practice. Further testing is therefore underway.

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