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The Role of Authentic Leadership and Cultural Intelligence in Cross-Cultural Contexts: An Objectivist Perspective

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Cultural adaptation in cross-cultural situations is an integral part of international management and leadership literature. However, there has been little theory or empirical research that takes into account the objectivist perspective of the necessity of leaders remaining true to their moral standards when operating in different host-cultures. We draw upon the authentic leadership and cultural intelligence literatures to explicate a model by which authentic leaders in a cross-cultural context can find a balance in the tension between their own deeply held values and those of the host-country's culture.

"Behavior is especially susceptible to external influences in the absence of countervailing internal standards. People who are not much committed to personal standards adopt a pragmatic orientation, tailoring their behavior to fit whatever the situation seems to call for. They become adept at reading social cues, processing and retaining social information, and varying their self-presentation"—Albert Bandura (1986, p. 375)

The Role of Authentic Leadership and Cultural Intelligence in Cross-Cultural Contexts: An Objectivist Perspective

Issues of cross-cultural management and leadership, emphasizing the importance of globalization and adapting to new cultures, are receiving increased attention from both researchers and practitioners (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009; Chrobot-Mason, Ruderman, Weber, Ohlott, & Dalton, 2007; Fisher-Yoshida & Geller, 2008). Yet, one difficulty leaders face in regards to globalization involves retaining their moral integrity—remaining authentic to their

personal beliefs—while being immersed in cultures with differing value systems. In the quote above, Bandura noted that the external environment influences behaviors when there is a lack of commitment to moral integrity, possibly leading individuals to act differently in diverse contexts. Indeed, global leaders may be extraordinarily adept at adapting to differing cultural situations, which has been characterized as having cultural intelligence; however, "in the absence of countervailing internal standards" (Bandura, 1986), such cultural adjustment may inhibit morally grounded cultural adaptation. News stories provide countless examples of business leaders exhibiting unethical behavior when acting within another nation's borders, such as sponsoring physical plants with poor or unsafe working conditions, implementing unfair wage policies, neglecting environmental standards, or violating humanitarian needs (Global Exchange, 2007). While the implementation of company-level morality clauses has received attention as one response to such dilemmas (Unruh, 2008), little consideration has been given to the complexity of ethical situations for the individual leader in a cross-cultural context. How does such a leader read social cues, process varying cultural information, and enact appropriate behaviors without abandoning the important internal standards that are central to his or her identity? In this paper, we develop a theoretical model to explain the process by which global leaders can both meet the demands for adaptation to another culture and remain consistent and authentic to their personal values.

In the global economy that characterizes our current state of commerce, leadership cannot only be grounded in the customs and behavioral norms of the prevailing culture; instead, we must consider new forms of leadership that allow leaders to examine personal values and beliefs within the context of different cultures. Leaders in a cross-cultural context face many dilemmas in which what they consider immoral is acceptable or amoral in the host culture–or vice versa. Instead of taking a culturally relativistic view (ex. "when in Rome, do as the Romans do") of ethics and morals, this paper's theory is grounded in an objectivist view, such that the leader's personal morals continue to be important, even when placed in a different system. Past research provides support for the idea that leaders, specifically in expatriate settings, experience dissonance between their own moral values and those of the host-country's culture (Brand & Slater, 2003). Social pressures can motivate behaviors that are in agreement with the standards of the culture at hand while violating deeply held moral values. Indeed, pressures to conform to host-culture norms may lead to moral disengagement, where the leaders no longer act in accordance with deeply held beliefs and surrender their authenticity. This evidence suggests that an objectivist approach, where one understands moral truths existing outside the person as distinct from internal values and judgments, is an important aspect of morally grounded cultural adaptation.

Although cross-cultural researchers provide support for universally endorsed principles, such as moral integrity, trustworthiness, and honesty as contributors to effective leadership (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004; Javidan, Dorfman, De Luque, & House, 2006), what is not universal is the prioritization of these principles and the judgments as to how these principles are enacted. In an objectivist paradigm, moral principles are distinct from the behaviors enacted in endorsement of these principles, and morally appropriate behaviors may differ across cultures (Schyns & Meindl, 2006). Therefore, despite the universal endorsement of moral integrity, we suggest that the judgments about what behaviors are most appropriate are not universal. The dilemma for global leaders is maintaining moral integrity in a manner that remains authentic to their personal values and aligns with the cultural norms and values of the host-country culture. Thus, by understanding contrasts in how various cultures prioritize and

enact universal principles, cross-cultural leaders can find a balance in the tension between their own deeply held morals and those of the host-country's culture. Furthermore, in answering the question as to whether it is possible for leaders to safeguard their moral integrity when taking on a cross-cultural role, this can be done from an objectivist perspective, whereby a meaning-making process occurs, allowing the leader to reconcile his or her values with those of the local host culture. It is this process that denotes the importance of the relationship between authentic leadership, cultural intelligence, and morally grounded cultural adaptation.

Overview of the Theoretical Model

The authors suggest that authentic leadership theory—which includes the dimensions of self-awareness, balanced processing, relational transparency, and the adoption of a moral perspective (Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008) — can lead to morally grounded cultural adaptation. We define morally grounded cultural adaptation as acclimatization to different cultures without compromising one's moral integrity, while also acting in an appropriate manner to the host-country's culture. By definition, authentic leaders approach a situation from a moral perspective, thinking through how decisions would help or harm individuals (Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, & Walumbwa, 2005; Luthans & Avolio, 2003; Walumbwa et al., 2008). We propose that authentic leaders—who possess a deep understanding of their actions and feelings (self-awareness), who have the ability to weigh information from both internal and external sources when making decisions about behavior (balanced processing), who have created an open dialogue with their followers (relational transparency), and whose decisions and actions stem from the morals developed within the culture of one's home country (moral perspective)—will be able to exhibit morally grounded cultural adaptation.

We also suggest that cultural intelligence, defined as the ability to interact effectively with culturally distinct individuals and to generate appropriate behavior in a new cultural setting (Thomas, 2006), will interact with authentic leadership, allowing the authentic leader to more fully comprehend the differences between the host culture values and his or her own deeply held beliefs and strengthening the positive relationship between authentic leadership and morally grounded cultural adaptation. Thus, cultural intelligence coupled with authentic leadership is theorized to create an interaction, whereby increasing levels of cultural intelligence will strengthen the relationship between authentic leadership and morally grounded cultural adaptation. It is proposed in this model that the facets of cultural intelligence—specifically, cognition, motivation, and behavior—are important mechanisms that should aid in strengthening the relationship between authentic leadership and morally grounded cultural adaptation due to the increased understanding of the host country's mores that comes with increased cultural intelligence.

Figure 1
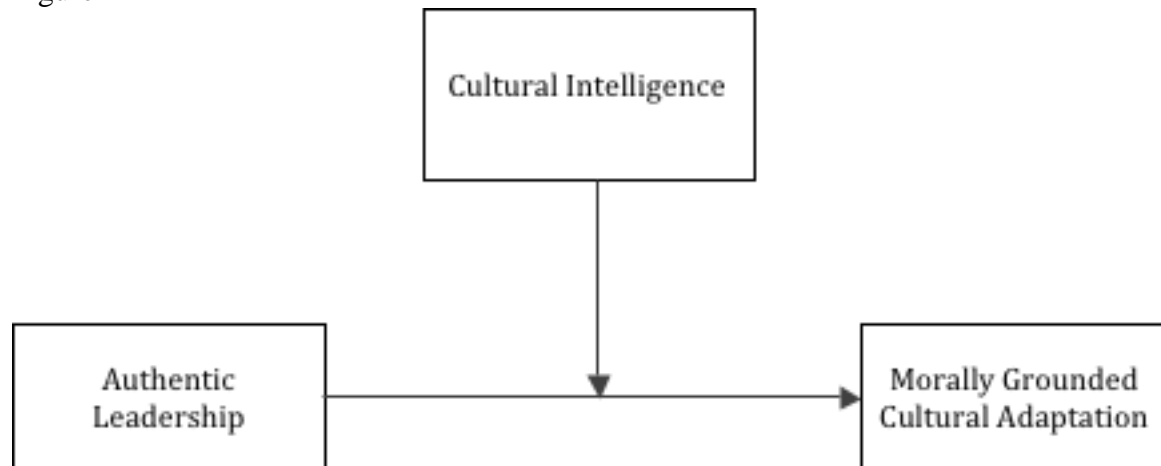
Overall, the purpose of this paper is to present a model of leadership grounded in an objectivist paradigm that addresses how leaders may exhibit moral integrity in multiple contexts. Leaders adapting to a new culture must be able to function and manage in culturally diverse settings (Ang, Van Dyne, & Koh, 2006) while keeping their own and others' moral perspectives salient (Walumbwa et al., 2008). We assert that if leaders ignore personal standards and moral inhibitions (moral disengagement; Bandura, 1991, 2002) in order to adapt to new cultures, at some point this process leaves a pragmatic weathervane that is guided by whatever moral or immoral guidelines exist in its setting whilst lacking important internal moral standards.

Authentic leadership theory specifically acknowledges the importance of taking a moral perspective when enacting behaviors (Avolio & Luthans, 2004; Gardner et al., 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2008). However, the theory also states that one must take a balanced perspective when using critical reasoning skills, requiring the authentic leader to analyze relevant information. In this sense, an authentic leader placed in a global context would examine different cultural ideas with a lens that may allow seemingly contrary perspectives to achieve alignment. We propose that this coupling between cultural intelligence and authentic leadership is integral to creating morally grounded, culturally adapted leaders who are more readily able to identify with and enact behaviors that are acceptable in different environments without disengaging their moral inhibitions. Such a leader recognizes nuances in human behavior that depend upon deeper-seeded values—going beyond just surface recognition of behaviors (the foundation of cultural intelligence)—by allowing leaders to explore the meanings of action in context.

The Morally Grounded, Culturally Adapted Leader

Presuming that leaders enter any context with internal standards for behavior, what happens to the leaders whose internal standards exist in apparent contrast to those encountered in a cross-cultural context? Consider for example the leaders who go from a context where employees at all levels of the organization are expected to act morally and are ostracized if they do not, to a culture where accepting the behaviors of your supervisor is a normative business practice, regardless of the morality of the behavior. Engaging in such behavior and seeing

oneself as perpetuating immoral behavior by not reporting a supervisor's misconduct can lead to self-devaluation and anxiety—both of which have negative impacts upon performance (Bandura, 1986). Thus, some individuals who value their morality regulate their behaviors when faced with the threat of such detrimental outcomes, generally by behaving in a manner that is in accordance with personal standards (e.g., by reporting unethical supervisors, one maintains positive self-regard).

In other cases, individuals may morally disengage in order to maintain the view of self as being a good person (Bandura, 2005; Kunda, 1990; Taylor & Brown, 1988). Moral disengagement occurs through rationalization (Bandura, 1991; Sykes & Matza, 1957), and the cross-cultural context provides an easy excuse for one to abandon personal standards or violate broader cultural standards. Take, for example, excuses such as, "It stopped being wrong for me to look the other way when my company decided to send me to this country. It's their fault if they don't like me allowing unethical behavior," or, "What happens in this country stays in this country." This is not to say that being placed in a cross-cultural context invariably leads to moral disengagement; however, we advocate that current theory must be more explicit in recognizing the likelihood that leaders will face moral dilemmas which arise simply as a function of being placed in a cross-cultural context.

In the literature on cultural adjustment and cultural adaptation of expatriates and other sojourners, the moral aspects of leader adjustment have received little attention. Although Bhawuk, Sakuda, and Munusamy (2008) did address some moral issues in their handling of intercultural sensitivity, the topic is otherwise scarce in adjustment and adaptation literature. Personality traits, cultural distance, family characteristics, formal company support, informal social support, and previous international experience have all been identified as antecedents to successful adjustment (Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou, 1991; Ward & Fischer, 2008); however, how individuals adapt their behaviors and handle the dilemmas of differing moral standards is absent from current adjustment research.

Beyond highlighting the moral challenges leaders are certain to face in a cross-cultural context, we suggest that cultural intelligence and authentic leadership may act in concert to increase morally grounded cultural adaptation. Authentic leadership is characterized in part by individuals who keep moral and ethical principles salient and central to behavior regulation (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Cultural intelligence brings awareness of issues that arise due to racial, ethnic, and nationality differences (Ang, Van Dyne, & Koh, 2006). We suggest that in order to strengthen the relationship between authentic leadership and morally grounded cultural adaptation, cultural intelligence must moderate the relationship, allowing the authentic leader to discern the nuances of specific cultural behaviors and thus leading to understanding and sense-making. A more detailed explication of the relationships among the components of cultural intelligence and authentic leadership follows.

Authentic Leadership

Authentic leadership includes four components: self-awareness, balanced processing, relational transparency, and an internalized moral/ethical perspective. These four components have been validated and build on a higher-order factor of authentic leadership (Walumbwa et al., 2008). We suggest that these four components can be broken down into cognitive, motivational, and active processes that work together with cultural intelligence, allowing a leader to attain morally grounded cultural adaptation while in a cross-cultural context.

Cognitive processes. Self-awareness is a cognitive state that refers not only to having trust in one's motives, feelings, desires, and self-relevant cognitions, but also to the outward environment and how individual strengths and weaknesses interact with others (Kernis, 2003). In a global leadership environment, self-awareness plays an important role in sensitizing leaders to differences between their personal values and those of the specific context. Additionally, balanced processing of self-relevant information, a second cognitive component, allows leaders to move beyond their ego and misconceptions about themselves (Kernis, 2003). Although related to self-awareness, balanced processing specifically involves the analysis of all available data in order to enact a decision. When applied to a cross-cultural situation, authentic leaders are aware of the impact of culture on their own value system and are better able to move beyond cultural biases in order to make more balanced assessments of the varying situations they face (i.e., beyond cultural stereotypes).

Motivational processes. Authentic leadership also includes the adoption of a moral/ethical perspective when using critical reasoning skills (Avolio et al., 2004). Thus, it follows that the authentic leader takes into account "the moral course of action, valuing moral values over other values, and taking personal responsibility for moral outcomes" (Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau, & Thoma, 1999, p. 101). As Bandura noted, "People do things that give them self-satisfaction and a sense of self-worth. They refrain from behaving in ways that violate their moral standards, because it will bring self-disapproval" (2005, p. 21). Though not all individuals adopt a standard of morality, authentic leaders do (Gardner et al., 2005) and therefore seek to avoid violations of their moral standards. Moral behavior is the product of individual and social influences (Bandura, 1991) and authentic leadership theory, which explicitly links morals and values to the leaders' self-concept, helping us begin to understand the role of personal moral standards when confronted with the need to enact different culturally accepted behaviors. Later, we will discuss how cultural intelligence informs leaders about the social influences of the cross-cultural context.

Active processes. The final component of authentic leadership, relational transparency, deals with exhibited behavior, which involves valuing and achieving openness and truthfulness in one's close relationships (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). This transparency is not necessarily full disclosure, but rather a selective process of enacting behaviors that allow disclosure of relevant and timely information, which in turn develops mutual intimacy and trust (Kernis, 2003). Cultural norms will dictate the level of transparency leaders choose to exhibit, but in any interactions, the authentic leaders would be forthcoming regarding information that is imperative to create a trusting relationship.

Self-awareness, balanced processing, a moral/ethical perspective, and relational transparency are all aspects that increase the authenticity of leaders; however, this theory has yet to be tested in a cross-cultural context and may not address the nuances that can lead to morally grounded cultural adaptation. Therefore, we suggest that the combination of cultural intelligence and authentic leadership promotes a greater amount of morally grounded cultural adaptation in the cross-cultural context than authentic leadership alone.

Cultural Intelligence

Cultural intelligence has been defined as "the ability to interact effectively with people who are culturally different" and "to generate appropriate behavior in a new cultural setting" (Thomas, 2006, p. 80). The construct was developed to address global trends in international management in which country-specific training has become less relevant (Earley & Peterson, 2004) given the mobility of managers and their frequent contact with culturally diverse settings. Thus, researchers have proposed that leaders need to develop a general capacity to gain knowledge and adjust their behavior to allow them to effectively carry out objectives embedded in a culturally diverse setting. Cultural intelligence is posited as a distinct and separate construct from self-monitoring, which is treated as a personality trait and not a developable ability (Snyder, 1974; Zaccaro, Foti, & Kenny, 1991). Furthermore, although impression management may share some similarities with cultural intelligence, the cultural intelligence research ventures into specific contextual aspects as well as specific cognitive, motivational, and behavioral dimensions that are not explained by the properties of impression management.

There are four fundamental elements of cultural intelligence (CQ) that parallel the components of authentic leadership: metacognitive and cognitive CQ (cognition), motivational CQ (motivation), and behavioral CQ (action) (Ng & Earley, 2006). These components also comprise the higher order factor of cultural intelligence.

Cognitive processes. Metacognitive CQ is the knowledge one has about one's thinking and the structures of one's mind. In order to bring about change in how individuals process information, it is important to redefine not only one's thinking (cognition) but also the way one thinks about thinking (metacognition) (Flavell, 1979). Cognitive CQ is defined as individuals' "knowledge of specific norms, practices, and conventions in different cultural settings" (Ang, Van Dyne, Koh, & Ng, 2004, p. 7). Cognitive CQ focuses on acquiring and understanding information from specific cultures, whereas metacognitive CQ encompasses how one goes about understanding the higher level construct of culture and what strategies one can use to collect information and understand cultural cues. In short, the metacognitive component investigates how one thinks about or processes the norms and behaviors of other cultures, while the cognitive component captures what those norms and behaviors are.

Motivational processes. The motivational perspective emphasizes values, self-efficacy, expectations, and goals (Earley & Ang, 2003). In order to develop one's cultural intelligence, leaders must have some impetus or incentive to learn about other cultures and adjust behaviors accordingly. Thus, motivational CQ encompasses the objectives and rewards that come from educating oneself about different cultures and environments as well as adapting to them.

Active processes. The behavioral aspect of cultural intelligence relates to individuals' abilities to act upon the culturally endorsed leadership styles (House et al., 2004) identified during the cognitive processing stage in order to present culturally accepted mannerisms. For example, in some Asian countries, charismatic/value based leadership is the leading culturally endorsed leadership style (House et al., 2004). This cultural knowledge informs how charisma is enacted in such cultures, and the motivation component provides the incentive to learn more about how charisma is displayed by Asians, enabling leaders to carry out such culturally appropriate behavior.

Cultural Intelligence as a Moderator of Authentic Leadership

We propose that authentic leadership combined with cultural intelligence will interact to allow a leader's deeply held values to drive the exhibited actions while taking into account the accepted host-country's cultural practices. This creates the conditions for morally grounded cultural adaptation. Authentic leadership coupled with cultural intelligence allows global leaders to adjust to different cultures without losing sight of their personal values and beliefs. These leaders are able to make adjustments in order to remain genuine, but also to be seen as effective by individuals with different backgrounds, values, and beliefs.

Figure 2
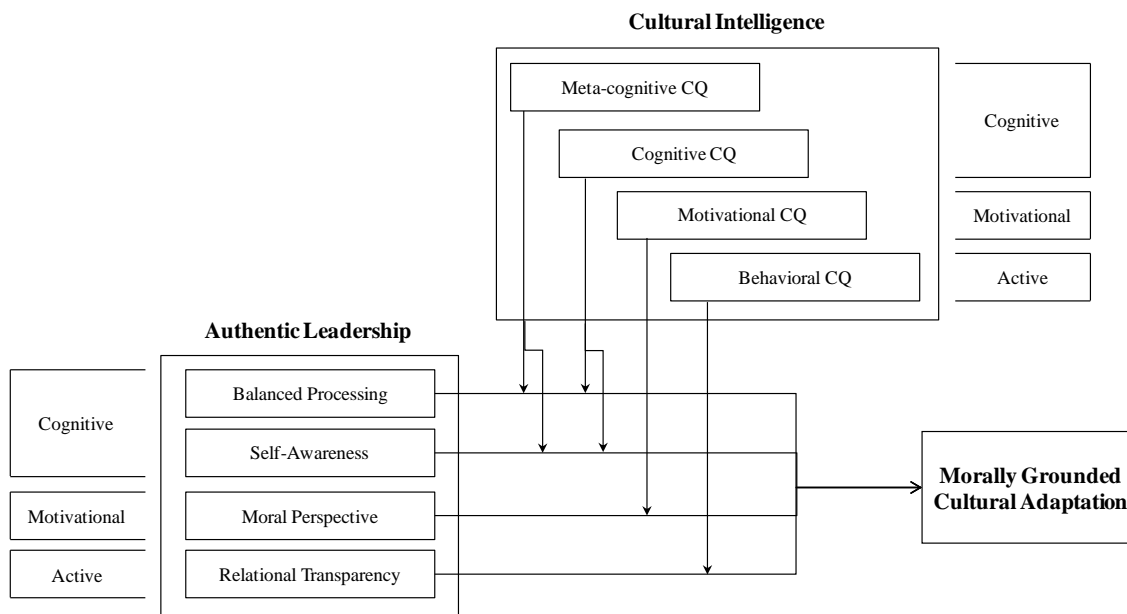
Cognitive interaction of cultural intelligence and authentic leadership. Above, we suggested that one may think of the balanced processing and self-awareness components of authentic leadership theory as cognitive constructs. We propose that coupling these with the cognitive component of cultural intelligence will strengthen leaders' morally grounded cultural adaptation (e.g., the ability to remain authentic to one's own value system) in the face of cross-cultural ethical dilemmas. We also suggest that this interaction between the cognitive components of authentic leadership and cultural intelligence will enable leaders to learn and adapt to foreign value systems (Earley & Ang, 2003).

Balanced processing, or weighing all accessible data equally, will increase the amount of information authentic leaders choose to receive from the environment. Leaders who keep in mind that there are many valid perspectives in any situation will pay greater attention to the nuances of information they receive and process from the environment. Therefore, by combining meta-cognitive CQ and cognitive CQ, leaders will not only have an information processing strategy for learning from new cultures (meta-cognitive CQ) but will also have a repository of cultural

knowledge (cognitive CQ) to access. They may, then, have a broader set of data with which to weigh many perspectives or use balanced processing.

Self-awareness deals with the ability to understand one's value system, behavioral signals, and one's role within a given interaction (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Due to the higher-level nature of metacognition, leaders will be more keenly aware of how culture influences their own information processing. In addition, the cognitive component of cultural intelligence not only informs leaders about other cultures, but it helps them to understand their own cultural mores and how such cultural norms and values influence their moral reasoning. We propose that the interaction between the cognitive components of cultural intelligence and authentic leadership gives the authentic leader the ability to transcend the limitations of his or her current cultural boundaries in order to become proficient in cross-cultural dealings, even while maintaining moral values.

> Proposition 1: Cognitive cultural intelligence (i.e. meta-cognitive and cognitive CQ) will moderate the relationship between self-awareness and morally grounded cultural adaptation such that as levels of cognitive cultural intelligence increase, the relationship between self-awareness and morally grounded cultural adaptation will increase.

> Proposition 2: Cognitive cultural intelligence (i.e. meta-cognitive and cognitive CQ) will moderate the relationship between balanced processing and morally grounded cultural adaptation such that as levels of cognitive cultural intelligence increase, the relationship between balanced processing and morally grounded cultural adaptation will increase.

Motivational interaction of cultural intelligence and authentic leadership. Authentic leadership theory defines a moral/ethical perspective as a process by which leaders stay true to their values, even when surrounded by external environmental pressures to conform to different types of behavior (Walumbwa et al., 2008). We suggest the centrality of this moral/ethical perspective in authentic leaders promotes morally grounded cultural adaptation. In a cross-cultural context, this relationship becomes stronger when a moral perspective is coupled with the motivational aspect of cultural intelligence. Motivational CQ describes a state in which leaders are willing to approach problem solving and action when different standards exist and build efficacy around these experienced behaviors (Earley & Peterson, 2004). If leaders only rely on the host culture's standards and exhibit behaviors without truly having ownership, they may inhibit the deeply held beliefs that serve as judgment cues in the process of self-regulation (Bandura, 1986). However, only having motivation to act ethically or morally in regards to one's own beliefs may seem rigid and unwavering, conflicting with the reality that different cultures have different judgments regarding what is appropriate ethical behavior. In our model, the moral/ethical perspective of authentic leadership contributes to the maintenance of the authentic self. The moral perspective informed by cultural intelligence provides the cross-cultural enhancement to the regulatory mechanism that allows authentic leaders to develop new scripts of behavior while remaining true to themselves.

Therefore, the motivation to understand the standards and norms of a different culture may lead to a deeper understanding of how one's own value system fits in with the current host culture, creating the basis for behavior that is acceptable to the leader. For example, with regard

to the issue of bribery—some cultures draw a clear distinction between gift giving as a mode of relationship building and acts of bribery, while other cultures view such activities as synonymous. A mature moral perspective may allow leaders to discern the universal moral principle of fairness and where the line is drawn for a particular culture and align such understanding with thresholds of moral and ethical behavior.

> Proposition 3: Motivational cultural intelligence will moderate the relationship between a moral/ethical perspective and morally grounded cultural adaptation such that as levels of motivational cultural intelligence increase, the relationship between a moral/ethical perspective and morally grounded cultural adaptation will increase.

Behavioral interaction between cultural intelligence and authentic leadership. Ang and Van Dyne (2008) suggest that cultures vary based on the "display rules that govern when and under what circumstances specific nonverbal expressions are required, preferred, permitted, or prohibited" (p. 7). A classic example is the requirement of sales clerks to smile even when feeling anger while interacting with a hostile customer (Grandey, 2003). A cross-cultural example may entail the interaction of Germans and English, in which the English judge the behavior of the Germans as impolite, even though the Germans would argue that they are displaying a cordial response.

This can take a psychological toll on those who portray behaviors contrary to their individual value system. Thus, with the presence of both authentic leadership and cultural intelligence, individuals will have the capacity to act in a moral or ethical manner, or enact behaviors that are extensions of one's values, rather than to attain acceptance by pleasing others (Gardner et al., 2005; Kernis, 2003). Leaders and followers must act with regard for their true values as well as be aware of the situational context and how certain behaviors will be perceived (Ilies, Morgeson, & Nahrgang, 2005).

In order to create interactions that increase morally grounded cultural adaptation, we propose that relational transparency needs to exist between leaders and followers. Relational transparency involves valuing and achieving openness and truthfulness in one's close relationships (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Thus, relational transparency will help open a dialogue about accepted behaviors, allowing leaders to remain morally grounded while adapting to the new culture.

Leaders use behavioral CQ to enact the level of transparency that may be acceptable in a specific culture. It may seem that some cultures would not value relational transparency at any level; however, even the act of approaching a new culture with an open mind toward interactions with the local society may be enough to allow leaders to learn and expand upon their beliefs. By playing a transparent role, leaders may acquire information from followers that will enhance both self-awareness and balanced processing, as well as provide further evidence of local customs and how they might coincide with their morals.

Relational transparency may also allow leaders to communicate to followers that they understand their behaviors may not always be socially acceptable. By acknowledging their shortcomings, they may increase their acceptance by followers, while also increasing assistance in developing acceptable behaviors (Vogelgesang, 2008). We recognize that acknowledging one's shortcomings may or may not increase acceptance by followers depending on the cultural situation, but we believe that cultural intelligence helps leaders discern when this is appropriate. Oftentimes, leaders who have been transplanted to a host culture are given some latitude as they

first overlook the behavioral norms. The followers ignore the missteps, and they welcome and accept the leader. However, as time goes on, if the behaviors are not adapted (mostly because the leader is unaware of the issues), followers will begin to revolt and become angry, possibly influencing the leader's failure in that role (Earley & Ang, 2004, p. 101-102).

> Proposition 4: Behavioral cultural intelligence will moderate the relationship between relational transparency and morally grounded cultural adaptation such that as levels of behavioral cultural intelligence increase, the relationship between relational transparency and morally grounded cultural adaptation will increase.

In summary, we suggest that the cognitive component of cultural intelligence moderates the relationships between self-awareness, balanced processing, and morally grounded cultural adaptation. Furthermore, motivational cultural intelligence moderates the relationship between leaders' moral/ethical perspectives and morally grounded cultural adaptation, while behavioral cultural intelligence moderates the relationship between relational transparency and morally grounded cultural adaptation. When the dimensions of cultural intelligence are present, the additional information included in the leader's critical thinking abilities about a different culture's values allows for morally grounded cultural adaptation and reduces the likelihood of moral disengagement.

Discussion

Given cross-cultural differences in normative behavior, our first concern was to address the means by which leaders may successfully adapt to a new culture while remaining committed to their moral perspectives. The GLOBE studies established moral integrity as a universal characteristic of effective leadership, and we sought to explicate a process by which leaders may maintain their moral integrity within cultural contexts that may have cultural differences in how this moral integrity is displayed. Thus, leaders remain morally grounded, even when adapting to a context that provides cues which run counter to their own value system. We suggest that culturally intelligent, authentic leaders are equipped with the capacity to adapt in a cross-cultural context as morally grounded leaders.

While we ascribe to principles of ethics that transcend cultural boundaries (i.e. universal moral principles of duty, truth, or justice), centuries of philosophical debate demonstrate that even universal principles are not unassailable (Goodwin & Darley, 2007). Further, an individual's understanding of universal moral principles is internally held as shaped by one's own cultural norms and experiences (Beauchamp & Bowie, 1997). Yet, we understand authentic leaders to be individuals who are self-reflective (Gardner et al., 2005), and self-reflection is important for creating consistency between principles and one's judgments on moral issues (Hartman, 2008).

In order to make initial advances in theory, it may be preferable to conceptualize a leader's morally grounded cultural adaptation with issues that are straightforward; however, future research must begin to pick apart what it means to behave "(im)morally" in a cross-cultural context. The discussion of moral behavior in a cross-cultural context begs the question of what are the behaviors with which we are really concerned, and what makes those behaviors immoral? In order to advance theory, it may be easier to go with examples that seem clearly black or white; however, it is evident that concerns over moral behavior exist in the cross-cultural context as shades of gray. We suggest that there are general categories of cross-cultural

behavior that may be evaluated against common moral decision-rules. By taking such an approach, future research may draw from a common typology that helps characterize the behaviors of concern in a cross-cultural context. Something as simple as violating rules of etiquette may be construed as immoral, and we suggest that there are common decision rules (e.g., intent and harm) that may help to characterize cross-cultural gray areas as black or white—or, at least, less gray.

In addition to considering ambiguous scenarios versus seemingly cut and dry moral decisions, it is also important to note the role of the interaction between authentic leadership and cultural intelligence in developing leaders who are prepared to deal with the challenges of globalization. The grayer areas of moral dilemmas may elevate leaders to higher levels of cognitive development, in which their self-awareness becomes deeper, their ability to balance increasingly grayer shades of information becomes more fine-tuned, and their moral perspective provides a richer moral identity. The interaction of cultural intelligence and authentic leadership may influence leaders to understand behaviors as immoral that they had not previously considered as such. We do not believe that individuals are either authentic leaders or they are not. Rather, the interaction of cultural intelligence and authentic leadership provides a continual developmental process in which leaders more accurately identify their value systems, the cultural influences on those value systems, and how to integrate them with other cultural value systems.

We recognize that the propositions we have made and their theoretical foundation may pose confounds at first glance. For example, how can a leader be authentic when he or she shifts values to adjust to a new culture, and conversely, how can a leader adjust to a new culture without shifting values? Our model is intended to identify this fine line and help leaders to understand that they must maintain a balance between remaining true to their values while being open to understanding the value system of another culture. In fact, we believe that this process helps leaders to develop into more authentic leaders as they build repertoires that are consistent with their core values and malleable to varying cultural contexts. The process will also strengthen their self-awareness and give them greater understanding of what their core values in fact are.

Conclusion

This paper makes a contribution to the leadership and international management literature by discussing the linkages and interactions between two emerging theories: cultural intelligence and authentic leadership. The propositions and model we present are testable and speak to the need to use multidisciplinary methods in order to explore the complex relationships that abound in global leadership research.

Our model explicates how cultural intelligence moderates the relationship between authentic leadership and morally grounded cultural adaptation. Thus, we suggest that although it is important for leaders to possess cultural intelligence, they must also develop in an authentic manner to avoid the pitfalls of merely imitating a host-country's culture, which in the global context might lead to misunderstandings, unintended insults, and generally an inability to find common ground based solely on diverging behavioral norms (Thomas, Schermerhorn, & Dienhart, 2004).

Finally, beyond leader-focused outcomes of maintaining morality and successfully adapting to a different culture, authentic leadership is also about the influence of leaders on their followers. Just as moral dilemmas arise due to ambiguity in cross-cultural encounters, so also

will ambiguity arise if leaders morally disengage. Such contradictions between leader behavior and espoused values also provide for followers' self-exonerating justifications for violating moral principles (Bandura, 1986). In the end, authentic leaders' behavior is guided by their values and beliefs. Yet, authentic leaders are self-reflective and self-aware. Equipped with cultural intelligence and understanding the distinction between culturally influenced moral judgments and universal moral principles, such leaders are prepared to adapt to new cultures while remaining morally grounded and avoiding the ambiguity of moral hypocrisy.

The proposed model provides a means to understanding how leaders may approach ethical dilemmas when interacting with a new culture. Our aim is to draw attention to the real possibilities that moral dilemmas arise and that moral disengagement is likely. However, with awareness of these possibilities, leaders can prepare by taking steps prior to a cross-cultural interaction which develop their authentic leadership and cultural intelligence. This will enable them to avoid the damaging personal and organizational effects of moral disengagement. Our focus, thus, is a positive approach to studying how leaders remain morally grounded while adapting to new and different cultures, and future directions may include personal and organizational outcomes of such adaptation.

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