

INTRODUCTION TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE ON INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONAL CONSULTING: CONSULTING PSYCHOLOGY GOES GLOBAL

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This Special Issue of the *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research* on “International Organizational Consulting: Consulting Psychology Goes Global” provides highlights of experienced practitioner consulting psychologists’ work in a variety of multinational contexts. A brief description of the context for the Special Issue is provided, followed by an outline of the articles the special issue contains. Questions addressed by the articles include the following: how do the assumptions of organizational consulting psychology as taught and practiced in the United States need to be changed when applied to individual, group, and organizational consultation in other countries? Are there issues specific to international organizational consulting psychology different from those addressed by existing cross-cultural psychology findings? How do practicing consulting psychologists learn how to negotiate international consulting projects from start to finish? What kind of overarching templates are useful when entering a new country of international practice?

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This Special Issue of the *Consulting Psychologist: Practice and Research* (CPJ) focuses on individual, group, and/or organizational level consultations in international contexts using a wide range of organizational consultation methodologies. Several of the major conceptual frameworks that influence international consulting are presented in this introductory article. The five articles that describe the international organizational consulting work of seasoned and highly regarded consultants each refer to one or more of these models.

This introduction is divided into two parts. Starting with the need and focus of this Special Issue, the first part identifies the major literature and research-based themes to orient the reader to the framework of the experience-based articles. These themes also are sufficiently applied so that they can advise practitioners approaching international assignments. The second part of this introductory article outlines the structure of the special issue, including brief highlights of the articles in the issue.

The Need and Focus of This Special Issue

The most effective and successful corporations and organizations are more likely to emerge when the confluence of excellent leadership, highly effective teams, and organizational structure and processes match the internal and external organization contexts in which the individuals, teams, and organization function (Cummings & Worley, 2009). Although the themes and issues described in this special issue apply broadly to domestic U.S. organizations, the added context of working internationally makes such consultation much more complex and risky.

Three components often related to success in organizations are leadership development, team development, and organizational development (OD). Other components, such as selection of persons and teams, are also important depending on the specific needs of the consultee. Leadership development (Day, 2000; Pearce, Conger, & Locke, 2007) may include learning how to manage interpersonal relationships, the social influence process, and the team dynamics. It can focus on the contextual factors surrounding the team, such as the perception of the organizational climate and the social network linkages between the team and other groups in the organization. Team development (Heathfield, 2012) focuses on the team members and teams' skills, accountability, and commitment as oriented toward collective performance results, work products, and personal growth. OD (Bradford & Burke, 2005) focuses on the systems framework, goals, methods, and human capital, and is measured by the success in reaching clearly articulated and measurable outcomes.

Leadership development, team development, and OD are complicated many-fold when the organization is multinational or when its leaders and/or consultants are from different countries than the one which is home to the organization (see, e.g., Lowman, 2013). Issues of significant cross-cultural communications, interpersonal operating patterns, and individual behavior differences often emerge. "A very basic truth [is that] Western psychology is rooted in an ideology of individualism, rationality, and empiricism that has little resonance in many of the 5,000 cultures found in today's world. More than 85% of the world's six billion people are from nonwestern ethnic and cultural traditions." (Marsella, 2001, p.7). Of course, organizational consultants have not yet worked in all 5,000 cultures!

Emerging Themes in International Organizational Consultation

Four main thematic areas may exist for those consulting psychologists practicing in international contexts (Cummings & Worley, 2009). The first theme concerns the critical importance of the cultural context of the organizations. The second theme emphasizes worldwide organization development. The third theme centers on national and regional economic development. The fourth factor considers the role of consultation in facilitating global social change. The articles in this special issue emphasize cultural contexts and worldwide economic development as the principle influences on their respective consultation processes and interventions. Therefore, a brief presentation on each of these two areas follows. The factors of national and regional economic development and of social change may significantly affect consultations focused on these two domains, especially in subsistence and developing economies. [See Cummings & Worley, 2009 for additional information].

Cultural Contexts

A concentrated focus attending to the cultural contexts helps ensure the organizational consulting change processes are aligned with the values held by the members of a company, country, or region. Several models germane to understanding such cultural differences have been developed. These include the cultural dimensions theory by Geert Hofstede (Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010; Hofstede, & Peterson, 2000), Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (2000), and more recently, Javidan, Dorfman, de Luque, and House (2006).

Hofstede's widely known research, used by several of the articles in the Special Issue, highlights five dimensions of culture: (1) context orientation; (2) power distance; (3) uncertainty avoidance; (4) achievement orientation; and (5) collectivism/individualism. Several of the authors reported using this model as a foundation for adjusting their interventions for cultural fit. Several also referred to

Trompenaars. His model describes seven cultural orientations that are important to understanding individual or group relationships. The seven are as follows: (1) universalism versus particularism; (2) individualism versus collectivism; (3) neutral versus emotional; (4) specific versus diffuse; (5) achievement versus ascription; (6) attitudes regarding time; and (7) attitudes toward the environment.

The Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness Research Project (GLOBE) study House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, and Gupta, (2004) incorporated both the Implicit Leadership Theory (ILT) and Hofstede's dimensions into a single research study. The GLOBE study extended the ILT to include individuals of a common culture maintaining a relatively stable common belief about leaders, which varies from culture to culture. Javidan et al. (2006) labeled this the Culturally Endorsed Implicit Leadership Theory (CLT). The GLOBE study expanded Hofstede's dimensions to include Uncertainty Avoidance, Power Distance, Collectivism I: Societal Collectivism, Collectivism II: In-Group Collectivism, Gender Egalitarianism, Assertiveness, Future Orientation, Performance Orientation, and Humane Orientation (House, Javidan, & Dorfman, 2001). All three of the above perspectives are useful to the international organizational consultant.

Worldwide Organization Development

Few changes in the world have had a more profound influence than the emergence of the global marketplace. Many companies that have focused on globalizing have grown tremendously. Companies that do not address globalization have floundered or perished (Cummings & Worley, 2009). Organizations operating globally must manage significant assets in diverse countries. They must balance product and functional concerns with numerous geographic issues. They contend with the need to coordinate working across cultural and linguistic boundaries that can impact organization practices or customer preferences.

Consideration of the need for global integration versus the need for local responsiveness creates a four-cell model that can guide organizational consultation intervention selection. According to Cummings and Worley (2009), corporations high on the need for global integration and lower on the need for local responsiveness are thought to need a global integration approach. Employee involvement and senior management team building are interventions that may be particularly fitting. In contrast, organizations low on the need for global integration but high on the need for local responsiveness are considered to have an international orientation. Examples of consultation interventions more suitable for this organizational context include strategic planning and cross-cultural training. Organizations high on need for global integration and low on the need for local responsiveness benefit from a transnational orientation. Building a corporate vision and intergroup relationships are common interventions. Finally, adopting a multinational approach is best for organizations low on both need for global integration and need for local responsiveness. Building reward systems as well as strategic alliances may be more effective interventions for such organizations.

Articles in the Special Issue

The sections above have provided some context for this Special Issue. What follow is a description of both the structure of the special issue as well as a brief summary of each of the articles it includes. Each of the contributing authors was asked to consider several questions. This Special Issue features five articles by highly experienced organizational consulting psychologists who have engaged in substantial professional international consultancy work. These authors focus on the importance of attending to the international contextual element to successful consultations when consulting cross-culturally and cross-nationally. Questions addressed by the articles include the following: How do the assumptions of organizational consulting psychology as taught and practiced in the United States need to be changed when engaged in individual, group, and organizational consultation in other countries? Are there issues specific to international organizational consulting psychology different from those addressed by existing cross-cultural psychology findings? How do

practicing consulting psychologists learn how to negotiate international consulting projects from start to finish? What kind of overarching templates are useful when entering a new country of international practice?

Following the introduction to the Special Issue and the five main articles, an integrative article (Fulkerson, this issue, pp. 325–337) provides overarching perspectives of the authors' contributions. Fulkerson elaborates upon the common themes that emerged from the five articles. Subsequently, he will suggest areas for future applied and foundational scholarship to further advance the science, practice, and craft of consulting in international contexts.

The five main articles are intended to help the reader understand the essential importance of successfully integrating culture into international organizational consultation work. The articles will accomplish this by each telling a unique story of respective lessons learned by the authors in their work with clients and consultants who are developing leaders, teams, and organizations operating in international contexts. Both common themes and distinctions among the contributions will contribute to a mosaic. None of the principle articles will include an exhaustive literature review, but various contributors will cite resources that serve as a foundation for their work as well as their own scholarship. Further, these five articles will focus on real experiences and real practice—lessons learned along the way.

Article 1: Consulting in International Contexts: Examining and Testing Assumptions

Organizations that are called “global corporations” are generally U.S./Western European–based companies that have expanded their operations globally. Microsoft is a prime example. In these global corporations, U.S./Western European business culture is dominant and leadership focuses on how to manage and lead individuals from other cultures to change. Much of these authors' (Leonard, Freedman, Hill, Ng, Warrier, & Chu, this issue, pp. 250–267) earlier practice working with global business was done in this context. Leadership development models that work well in the global corporations, work poorly or not at all in local, particularly nonwestern, cultures. This article examines and explores the assumptions that consultants from the United States or Western European cultures use in their consulting practices and how these impact the success of their efforts.

Article 2: Thirty Years of Global Leadership Training: A Cross-Cultural Odyssey

White and Shullman (this issue, pp. 268–278) have spent much of their respective professional lives training leaders. This article presents a rich narrative description of their work as international organizational consultants operating and delivering services in the global environment. It is based on their experiences in the U.K., Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Sweden, Malaysia, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Russia, Canada, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Israel, China and others countries.

The article describes factors that make the practice of global management and global consulting more complex than consulting domestically. White and Shullman (this issue), based on their work with dozens of international organizations and corporations, analyze the root cause of failures by global organizational management consultants and consider the difficulty of determining the right approach for all stakeholders within the broader global systems to audiences around the world. They argue that the common misperception of Eastern cultures and organizations by many Western managers and consultants who have not been properly prepared to anticipate the differences is a major source of failed international consultancies. The article provides examples of interventions that have been tried by consultants and managers, internationally, with varying degrees of success. It offers recommendations as to organizational strategies, guiding principles, and competencies that can help global consultants better navigate the ethical maze their clients face and that they themselves face as they work with diverse cultures and organizations.

Article 3: Dyad Team Development Across Cultures: A Case Study of Two High Potentials

Vandaveer (this issue, pp. 279–294) discusses the impact of differing cultures among top level organizational leaders; a Team member dyad in this case will be within the framework of a specific case involving (a) a male American expatriate leader, president of a large business unit for an American multi-national company, and based in the U.S. and, (b) one of his direct reports, a Pakistani woman who was the Director of Strategy and Planning for the business unit. The business unit President was a results-driven, high-performance-standards, perfectionist, yet caring leader, whose primary leadership style was “pace setting” (Goleman, “Leadership That Gets Results” – HBR 2000). The focal leader had joined the president’s new leadership team from the planning role for the Africa-Mid-East region.

This case illustrates some of the complexities of cross-cultural leadership, particularly where there is as high a degree of variance in values, styles, and world-views driven largely as more and more people are educated outside their home countries and are increasingly experienced in and acculturated toward living and working in multiple countries. Literature and experientially based learning and conclusions drawn from this one consultant’s experiences in working with leaders and their multicultural teams are outlined, and implications for development of both international leaders and international consultants are articulated.

Article 4: Selecting and Developing Organizational Leaders in Latin America: La Cultura Importa

The focus of this article is on work of developing organizational leaders in Central and South American contexts. International consulting psychologists in the modern global economy face a difficult task in trying to adapt leaders to operating in different cultural contexts, including the one of the country they are visiting, the region, and particularly that of the organization which is hiring them. Companies with huge operations all over the world have their own inside experts, from Latin America to Asian affairs, who travel constantly and study individual needs in each areas.

This article is grounded in the author’s experiences consulting in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru. One of its primary purposes is to help consultants develop some understanding of the differences in contracting, diagnosis, and intervention that have to be met when attempting to do consulting work in those countries. Two issues are addressed to explain the six respective minicases. The first concerns the focus on the selection and development of leaders. The second focuses on enhancing the effectiveness of the particular business.

Article 5: Global Consulting in a Culturally Diverse World: Ethical and Legal Implications

Finkelman & Lopez (this issue, pp. 307–324) present an overview of the ethical and legal dilemmas faced by organizational consultants in global environments. They describe the critical factors that make the practice of global management and global consulting complex, ambiguous and challenging. In consideration of the common misperception of Eastern cultures and organizations by many Western managers and consultants who have not been properly prepared to anticipate the differences, the article offers recommendations as to organizational strategies, guiding principles, and competencies that can help global consultants better navigate the ethical maze they and their clients face in working with diverse cultures and organizations. Through the use of consultancy examples drawn from their professional experiences, the authors analyze typical causes of failures resulting from cross-culturally complex ethical or legal dilemmas.

Article 6: Consulting in International Contexts: An Integrative Perspective

The final article in this Special Issue on consulting in international contexts is authored by a highly seasoned consultant (Fulkerson, this issue, pp. 325–337) who has focused his consultancies in this area of organizational consulting psychology. This synthesis article highlights the

commonalities of the main articles in terms of themes and practices. In specific, Fulkerson discusses the contributions of the above articles from the framework of six foundations: (1) the practice of organizational consulting psychology, (2) understanding of the global context, (3) awareness of the specifics of different cultures, (4) recognition of when culture does not matter, (5) skills in the dynamics of cross-cultural facilitation and engagement, and (6) awareness of cross-national ethical challenges and considerations. He then discusses the competencies international organizational consultants need. Finally, he gives suggestions related to future practice development as informed by the needed applied research to further advance this field.

Contributions of the Special Issue

The field of international organizational consulting is, in many ways, still in its infancy. Practice far exceeds the science (Lowman, 2012) that will hopefully inform it (and vice versa) in the future. The articles in this special issue provide a rich narrative of the experiences of seasoned consultants working in international consulting contexts. As such, it contributes to an expanded understanding of the complexities of this very challenging and very stimulating OCP work. The use of case studies as a research method in several of the articles illustrates the potential of scholarship of this approach. The issues presented in the other articles are salient to international organizational consultation work.

It is hoped that this special issue will excite practitioners and applied researchers alike to further explore the development and expansion of effective and efficacious organizational consultation in international contexts. The world has become global, and this trend will continue to grow exponentially.

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