The Effects of Intercultural Communication Competency-Based Instruction on Intercultural Communication Competence

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Abstract: This study explored the effects of a competency-based adaptive learning approach in intercultural communication education on intercultural communication competencies (ICCs) targeted for students preparing for a university summer abroad program. Applying a pretest-posttest-control group design, the study assessed participant ICCs using the multivariate Go Culture Assessment. The treatment group received adaptive group coaching in ICC while the control group received no additional tailored or adaptive preparation. Treatment group results revealed significant paired t-test comparison increases in 11 of the 17 GCA factors, while control group participants increased only in 3 of the GCA factors. The study includes a comprehensive literature review of intercultural communication competency, indicates the need for more measurable outcomes regarding intercultural communication competencies, and points to this study as a competency-based learning approach to communication education.

Keywords: Intercultural communication competency, intercultural communication education, intercultural assessment, competency-based education and coaching

1. Introduction

Higher education increasingly demands internationalization of curricula, units, or courses that facilitate global education outcomes. One reason is the number of students studying across national boundaries approaching three million (Jackson, 2015) with approximately 200,000 U.S. students studying abroad (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009). Second, the workplace expects more global awareness, travel and commerce. For instance, the annual GMAC and Brookfield (2014) reports project expatriation to increase up to 47% over the coming years, yet they also document intercultural early return and failure rates at over 30%. Third, students in colleges and universities appear deficient in global skills and in education preparing them internationally (American Council on Education, 2000; Hayward & Siaya, 2001).

A growing cultural interdependence (World Health Organization, 2014) and international conditions traditionally point out that the responsibility for developing global awareness falls to colleges and universities (Qiang, 2003). In response, some 71% of higher educational institutions have initiated or strengthened international programming that focuses on culture-general or culture-specific education (Childress, 2009; de Wit, 2002; Leask, 2009). Examples of programs comprise special graduate-certification in foreign language as well as participation

in local intercultural events and study abroad (i.e. University of Kansas' Global Awareness Program, 2014; Syracuse University, 2014; Taylor, 2004). In another example, Fayetteville State University's (2014) program on International Education focuses on preparing students for "global interdependence" predominantly through research programs that complement study abroad experiences (p. 1). To produce graduates who can "work across borders," Seattle University (2014) developed a Global Awareness Specialization where students enroll in cultural courses designed to complement majors and career paths (p. 1). These examples are encouraging and begin to address the rationale for such programs.

However, communication educators have an additional task to heighten actual cultural engagement and interaction, a specific task which surpasses global awareness categories. That task galvanizes relevant intercultural communication competencies (ICCs). The National Education Association (2012) noted that "if today's students want to compete in this global society..., they must also be proficient communicators" (p. 5). With so many students and professionals studying or working in host cultures, the need for communication education that prepares students for intercultural communication competence is substantial (Arasaratnam, 2015; Jackson, 2015; Martin, 2015). Unfortunately, evidence is limited demonstrating ICCs that go beyond just cultural awareness or knowledge. That is, a need exists for outcomes based programs and particularly for intercultural communication education that can demonstrate specific and measurable ICC outcomes (Deardorff, 2006). Research to further inform intercultural communication education effectiveness outcomes is a viable research agenda. The beginning of such a quest turns next to a review of ICC.

2. Intercultural Competence

Sometimes also referred to as adjustment or effectiveness, intercultural competence (IC) often overlaps with intercultural communication theory to embody intercultural communication competency (ICC) research and practices. A brief review of touchstone research describes some of the trends in ICC development and its importance to intercultural communication education.

Historically, IC highlighted expatriate psychological and sociological adjustment and adaptation (Ward & Kennedy, 1993; Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999). Acculturation indices such as integration, separation, marginalization, and assimilation (e.g., Caligiuri, 2000; Black & Stephens, 1989) usually worked from a classic expatriate stress model which typically measured adjustment related to three outcomes: work, interaction, and general culture. Both large-scale (Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer & Luk, 2005) and longitudinal (Anderzen & Arnetz, 1997) studies continually supported Black, Mendenhall, and Oddou's (1991) adjustment model which asserted a stressor-stress-strain model linking three main adjustment dimensions: (1) general host culture non-work factors such as living conditions, local food, transportation, entertainment, facilities, and health care services; (2) interaction associated with host country nationals inside and outside of work; and (3) work assignment or job. These three outcomes have historically shaped foundational theory development and measurement of cross-cultural adjustment (Mendenhall, Kuhlmann, Stahl & Osland, 2002).

IC research then trended to examine adjustment from the perspective of an organizational competency perspective. Hemmasi, Downes, and Varner (2010) validated the traditional

expatriate adjustment three-dimensional model, but emphasized job success with factor analysis and reliability support for nine task-related constructs: cultural adjustment, work-related adjustment, career development, HQ-subsidiary coordination, assignment completion, professional/skill development, shaping and controlling the subsidiary, satisfaction, and overall assignment success/effectiveness. Pinto, Cabral-Cardoso, and Werther (2012) examined the relationship between Black and Stephens' (1989) three dimensions of adjustment and two other measures known as the General Assignment Satisfaction (with five items from Bonache, 2005) and a measure of Withdrawal Intentions measuring intentions to withdraw from assignment, organization, and occupation (Carmeli, 2005). Correlations revealed that adjustment predicted both assignment satisfaction and assignment withdrawal intentions (r values from 0.18 to 0.35). Assignment satisfaction predicted all three withdrawal intentions (assignment, r = - 0.56; organization, r = - 0.45; occupation, r = - 0.31).

Recent IC research shifts expatriate adaptation and relocation studies to embrace more holistic elements related to adjustment, motivation, and retention (Firth, Chen, Kirkman & Kim, 2014). Hippler, Caligiuri, and Johnson (2014) combined dynamic person-environment (P-E), novelty of culture, family factors, organizational support, and psychodynamic adjustment qualities. Lee and Kartika's (2014) regression model correlated antecedents of individual factors (emotional intelligence, cultural intelligence, experience abroad), family factors (family support, family adaptability, parental demands, family to work conflict), social capital (mentoring behavior), organizational support, and a psychology contract to predict expatriate adjustment and expatriate performance (R^2 = .708, p = .001). Haslberger, Brewster and Hippler (2013) explored multiple dimensions of expatriate adjustment as correlations among the person and environment (P-E fit theory: person-vocation, person-job, person-organization, person-group, person-supervisor) as yet another model combining external and internal demands to explain adjustment and satisfaction. Ren, Shaffer, Harrison, Fu, and Fodchuk (2014) developed a holistic path analysis predicting relocation adjustment and retention testing cross-cultural demands (cultural novelty: cultural value distance, host country language deficiency), proactive tactics (information seeking, relationship building, positive framing), and a fresh concept they called embeddedness (breadth and depth of connectedness in one's foreign posting).

Relatively recent IC research pinpoints the effects of family and spouse on adjustment and retention. Brown (2008) reported four dominant couple factors that were linked with relocation effectiveness: (1) reduced self (feeling less valued, competent, or uncertain about the future); (2) relationship strains (decline in partner relationship, dealing with partner's disappointment, too many demands/expectations, insufficient time with partner); (3) local pressures (daily living challenges such as driving, shopping, engaging culture, concerns over health, safety and security); and (4) isolation (no close friends, feeling isolated and cut off, disappointment in assignment benefits). Spousal adjustment has also been deemed a factor in expatriate failure (Gupta, Banerjee & Gaur, 2012), and new methods have been advanced to analyze family dimensions as a significant predictor (Rosenbusch & Cseh, 2012).

3. Intercultural Communication Competence Education and Assessment

Adding to these insightful IC studies, Communication theorists and educators have contributed

significantly, expanding the literature from IC adjustment to include interactivity and communication processes emerging as an ICC discussion. The list of theories and models combining IC and ICC toward theory and practice is lengthy but includes: cultural awareness and communication (Kim, 1988; Wiseman, Hammer & Nishida, 1989; Imahori & Lanigan, 1989), intercultural communication effectiveness (Dodd, 2007), elasticity, change management (Tucker & Baier, 1982), interpersonal interaction and self-monitoring (Dodd, 1987), self-control and interpersonal elasticity (Hammer, Nishida & Wiseman, 1996), respecting co-cultures (Wiseman, Hammer & Nishida, 1989), host-culture language acquisition (Fantini, 1995), initiating or increasing student contact with potential host culture nationals (Gudykunst & Hammer, 1988; Zimmerman, 1995), mentoring and communication (Zhuang, Wu & Wen, 2013), and the intercultural study abroad experience itself (Arasaratnam & Doerfel, 2005).

A thorough review is summarized in a comprehensive article by Spitzberg and Chagnon (2009) who discuss some dozen models and more than 250 variables associated with intercultural communication competence. A seminal 1989 volume of the *International Journal of Intercultural Relations (IJIR)*, edited by Judith Martin, influenced many other studies and together incubated a 2015 volume (Arasaratnam, 2015; Deardorff, 2015) devoted to intercultural competence in IJIR which extends the quest for definitions, conceptualizations, assessments, and related issues going forward in this field. The resulting conclusions rivet attention not only to the earlier indicated communication-oriented notions but also renewed focus on interpersonal-intercultural overlap (Kealey, 2015; Spitzberg, 2015), consideration of feelings/behaviors/cognitions toward others (Martin, 2015), more consensus of definition, contextual analysis, power analysis, identity factors, language, synchrony in relationship, multi-faceted personality traits, values, motivations, and co-creation in social networks (Kim, 2015; Chi & Suthers, 2015).

The goal of creating measures of ICC-related assessments has evolved simultaneously. Recent reviews have identified some 100 intercultural competence instruments (Deardorff, 2015). As assessment development goes forward, researchers indicate a need for future additions to the assessment inventories. First, Deardorff (2015) observed a need for holistic behavioral assessments (i.e., working in diverse teams and developing relationships). Second, she advocated a need for studies with improved research designs such as control groups and performance-based measures. Third, while Kealey (2015) praised how many instruments have good reliability, he lamented the lack of predictive validity and the potential vulnerability of self-reports. Fourth, Dodd (2007) noted that many instruments are limited to proprietary training and consulting organizations and consequently are not easily available for research and educational applications. Fifth, Martin (2015) acknowledged that the popular ABC (affect, behaviors, cognition) model dominating the research and measurements should include holistic, relational, and spiritual views of intercultural communication competence while placing less emphasis on national cultural conceptualizations (which she depicts as somewhat bounded) and more emphasis on multiple cultural identities and contextual dialectical interactions. Koester and Lustig (2015) agreed and argued for studies with more interaction variables in addition to adequate assessment validation of competence. While Kim (2015) did not explicitly address assessments, her intercultural definitional reconceptualization involving relationship synchrony, multiple personality traits, values, and motivations imply requisite measurements.

4. Rationale

Communication educators have the opportunity to equip this generation for intercultural communication competence through education and training. With higher education's increased attention to internationalization and global awareness in its many forms (Green, 2012; Brandenburg & Federkeil, 2007), communication can be an educational centerpiece. Meanwhile, studies measuring intercultural communication education outcomes and effects are limited. For instance, Li, Mazer, and Ju (2011) identified the problems with stereotypes, speaking clarity, and credibility for international Teaching Assistants. Park, Lee, Yun, and Kim (2009) indicated an interaction of decision authority and verbal/nonverbal immediacy comparing Korean culture on student satisfaction. Wadsworth, Hecht, and Jung (2008) explored the role of identity gaps, discrimination, and acculturation in international students' educational satisfaction in American classrooms. An empirical study examining the race relations program participation revealed significant differences in attitudes, salience, and behaviors in the experimental group compared with the control group (Muthuswamy, Levine & Gazel, 2006).

The present research sought to explore how classroom extra-curricular coaching could prepare students for intercultural communication competency effectiveness. Insuring that communication educators have a reliable classroom or other heuristic means to develop intercultural communication competence has been elusive. Thus, embracing a competency-based intercultural communication education program focused on outcomes represents a robust approach for actual intercultural performance, not just knowledge or awareness. Velten (2016) used a pretest-posttest-treatment-control group comparison applying individualized coaching for a pre-departure student abroad program generating significant differences from the pretest to posttest in cultural interpersonal relations, adaptation, and task completion ($p = .04$). Jackson's (2015) detailed educational program was designed to develop measurable intercultural competence outcomes as assessed by Hammer's (2011) DMIS on ethnocentrism-ethnorelativism with significant outcomes. A study of business students in a campus abroad program compared the GCA intercultural communication competency variables in a pretest-posttest design which predicted significant cultural relationships, task completion, and interaction in cultural adaptation ($R^2 = .73$, $p = .001$) (Dodd, Lytle & Winegeart, 2008).

The present study sought to expand such analyses and consequently address Deardorff's (2015) suggestions for more control group comparisons and pretest-posttest research. Applying a pretest-posttest-control group design, this study examined the effects of a customized extra-curricular ICC education program on study abroad students. The outcomes measured in this study correspond with Kealey's (2015) and Spitzberg's (2015) insistence on interpersonal engagement dimensions of ICC in communication education rather than education focused only on national, cultural, or diversity identity.

H1: ICC treatment group compared with control group will show significant increases from pretest to posttest in intercultural communication competencies.

5. Methodology

5.1. Respondents

Respondents were 107 students from a culturally diverse university in the Southwestern United States (8,000 undergraduate/graduate students, 41 states, and 131 countries) organized into two groups. The treatment group was enrolled in a global awareness program, while the control group included students in humanities and liberal arts courses (N control = 86, N treatment = 21 with both groups split equally on gender). After the four month pretest to posttest period, the control group had 38 with 19 in the treatment group.

5.2. Procedures

The groups completed the 16 scales in the ICC measurement (Go Culture Assessment, GCA) as the pretest, and again as a posttest as semester classes ended. The control group semester included humanities courses with no explicit ICC educational elements, and members were offered a small gift card if they completed all assessments. The treatment group underwent an intercultural preparation course (including logistics, health tips, passports, financials, etc.) and participated in five extra-curricular training sessions.

Appendix two provides a thorough training program description, but training began with interpretation of the 16 GCA variables reported as visual (bar graph), numeric (from 20-100%), and verbal scores and corresponding self-improvement practices. Each of the five sessions combined multiple training approaches. Following a brief didactic explanation of the GCA scales (what they mean and reasons for low or high scores), students identified their scores and were asked to begin personal journaling designed for goal setting. Guided by a trained and experienced ICC educator, small groups of participants discussed and offered potential reasons for low scores and generated suggestions for increasing one's likelihood of host culture success.

Guided group discussion offered mutual support and where some students scored high, collaborative participant useful insights contributed to the whole. The reasoning behind this didactic + self-reflection + group discussion customized extra-curricular approach emanates from higher performance studies in areas such as negotiation, task, and overall performance, stemming from competency-based coaching for teaching intercultural communication in previous research (Mokhtari & Velten, 2015).

5.3. Measurements and Analysis

The treatment group who received the course and the individual competency-based instruction were compared with the control group (no coaching) using the GCA's 16 scales. This instrument is based on direct correlations with ICC conceptualizations and has been validated with expatriates going to 30 countries. These studies have been widely published and include expatriate preparation to Latin America, Europe, etc. (see Dodd, Lytle & Winegeart, 2008; Velten, 2016). The present study revealed an overall Cronbach alpha of .93. Previous predictive validity studies indicate a range of multiple correlations from .62 to .86 (Dodd, 2007;

Velten, 2016). GCA scale items and Cronbach reliability alphas for this sample are included in Appendix A. The data were entered into SPSS and subjected to paired t-tests for the control and experimental groups and Cronbach's alpha for scale reliability.

6. Results

The control group showed no significant pretest to posttest differences among the 16 intercultural communication competencies nor the overall readiness total except for managing ambiguity/uncertainty (pre = 56.3, post = 63.90, t = 2.16, df = 37, p = .04), family accommodation (pre = 87.91, post = 78.91, t = 2.56, df = 37, p = .02), and social inclusion (pre = 70.00, post = 75.01, t = 2.10, df = 37, p = .04). As indicated later in the discussion, it is possible testing effects may explain these unexpected differences.

The treatment group displayed significant differences from pretest to posttest in 11 intercultural communication competencies, including the overall GCA: communication motivation (pre = 78.42, post = 87.37, t = 2.07, df = 18, p = .05), engaging diversity (pre = 79.37, post = 85.58, t = 4.26, df = 18, p = .001), communication initiation (pre = 79.47, post = 86.32, t = 2.23, df = 18, p = .04), managing ambiguity and uncertainty (pre = 66.84, post = 77.89, t = 2.64, df = 18, p = .02), relocation motivation (pre = 81.05, post = 90.00, t = 2.77, df = 18, p = .01), communication empowerment (pre = 79.37, post = 83.79, t = 2.43, df = 18, p = .03), social inclusion (pre = 78.95, post = 86.32, t = 2.69, df = 18, p = .02), task confidence (pre = 65.05, post = 70.95, t = 3.13, df = 18, p = .006), transition experience (pre = 82.95, post = 89.89, t = 2.91, df = 18, p = .009), family interaction (pre = 81.11, post = 88.89, t = 2.40, df = 18, p = .04), and total readiness (pre = 79.21, post = 85.68, df = 18, t = 4.62, p = .001). Not significant were flexibility (pre = 84.74, post = 84.11, df = 18, t = .147, p = .885), innovation (pre = 85.79, post = 90.00, df = 18, t = -1.80, p = .088), family accommodation (pre = 90.00, post = 91.11, df = 8, t = -1.55, p = .594), interpersonal trust/empathy with strangers (pre = 82.63, post = 90.00, df = 18, t = -1.527, p = .144), transition ease (pre = 81.05, post = 82.11, df = 18, t = -.438, p = .667), and openness to communication (pre = 86.32, post = 88.95, df = 18, t = -1.05, p = .310).

H1: The hypothesis anticipating significant gains for the treatment group is confirmed.

Table 1. Treatment Group Significant Pretest – Posttest Scores

Variable	**Pretest**	**Posttest**	**df**	**Paired t-test**	***p***
Communication Motivation	78.42	87.37	18	2.07	.05
Engage Diversity	79.38	85.58	18	4.26	.001
Communication Initiation	79.47	86.32	18	2.23	.04
Managing Ambiguity/Uncertainty	66.84	77.89	18	2.64	.02
Relocation Motivation	81.05	90.00	18	2.77	.01
Communication Empowerment	79.37	83.79	18	2.43	.03
Social Inclusion	78.95	86.32	18	2.69	.02
Task Confidence	65.05	70.95	18	3.13	.006
Transition Experience	82.95	89.89	18	2.91	.009
Family Interaction	81.11	88.89	18	2.40	.04
Total Readiness Score	79.21	85.68	18	4.62	.001

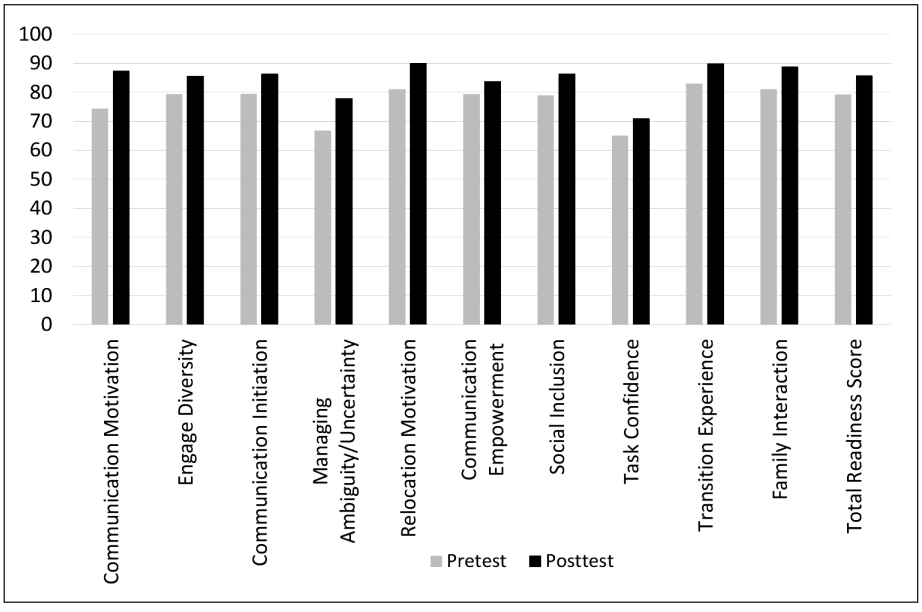

Figure 1. Treatment Group Significant Pretest – Posttest Scores

7. Discussion and Suggestions for Intercultural Communication Education

This study examined customized preparation strategies across a reliable and valid assessment index of intercultural communication competencies. The results revealed 11 of 17 (including total score) significant differences from pretest to posttest for the treatment group. Thus, the hypothesis is confirmed. ICC factors where treatment group participants displayed significant pretest to posttest included communication motivation, engaging diversity, communication initiation, managing ambiguity and uncertainty, relocation motivation, communication empowerment, social inclusion, task confidence, transition experience, family interaction, and total readiness.

Among the 17 variables, 3 were significant from pretest to posttest in the control group; managing uncertainty, family accommodation, and social inclusion. Since they only received general education courses with no intended instruction regarding adaptation, culture, or assimilation, the unexpected differences are puzzling. Sometimes this situation can result from one of the threats to internal validity in experiments: the repeated testing effect. That is, the very taking of a test without meaningful intervention can influence the scores in a posttest and be mistaken for a treatment effect (Shadish, Cook & Campbell, 2002). Related to this idea is that with practice respondents may give socially desirable answers where the respondents sense what the experimenter wants and give the socially desirable answer. However, a study like this study which applies an experimental-control group design normally mitigates such effects. Furthermore, in comparing pretest to posttest results for skewness and kurtosis these 3 variables showed no abnormality (2.0 or greater) except for family accommodation which had

a high negative skew -2.04 and high kurtosis (5.21) on the pretest but not the posttest. Thus, despite safeguards of design and normal distributions (except pretest family accommodation), we cannot determine why these differences occurred. Further research should explore this outcome and comparison.

This study answers concerns for improved program internationalization and assessment. Higher education investment expects outcomes which could be argued to go beyond a minimum of global awareness to graduates with measurable ICC knowledge and skills. Thus, the study confirms the value of enhanced intercultural curriculum and a bolstering of student intercultural readiness outcomes (Childress, 2009). We can thus assume merit in global awareness programs which intentionally integrate ICC development as the new standard for outcomes-based intercultural communication education.

These findings also point to personal growth and development related to ICC factors. The review of literature pointed to the need for curricular internationalization leading to personal and situational global awareness. However, the literature and this analysis extend that need to underscore for communication educators how intercultural competency exceeds global awareness or internationalization. When we heighten communication education by adding ICC qualities, we enlarge the conversation to the skills necessary for host culture engagement. This study provides evidence that a tailored extra-curricular approach alongside minimal classroom intercultural preparation result in comparative intercultural communication competency intensification. This study also pivots interest toward scholarship not only for theoretical conceptualizations but for revised intercultural communication education models and assessment. In an era of educational scrutiny, communication educators can provide evidence for enhanced global awareness through intercultural communication competency education.

According to Bennett (2011), concrete intercultural communication learning experiences often overlook the need for structured, individualized reactions and feelings. In the quest for global-centered education, we should not overlook student-centered needs for mentored, customized, individual skills and knowledge, a point indicated in at least one other study (Velten, 2016). Thematically, the treatment condition across the eleven significant differences collectively indicates meaningful changes in managing the ambiguities and complexities of culture, avoiding ethnocentrism, anticipating task confidence and resilience, and interacting with and reaching out to communicate with diverse people and teams. Future research should consider how to refine these factors and create optimal learning conditions to create even more robust outcomes.

As with any student, volunteer-based study occurring over time, participant attrition should be taken into consideration when reviewing study results. Future research should account for the factor of typical or random summer growth experiences within control groups. In this study, even given the low N in the treatment group, fortunately the numbers held high enough to justify the robustness of t-tests. Scholars should also consider multivariate inputs and outcomes measures. At times, scholars have to rely on meta-analyses, which inherently create inconsistencies by not having the same samples or measures. Obviously, too, future research could enlarge samples and apply additional co-variables such as diversity, gender, age, and experience.

This study leads to recommendations and ideas for intercultural communication educators who wish to strengthen ICC on campuses that try to educate for internationalization. These

suggestions include: developing ICC courses for study abroad and for university general education core, offering discipline-specific courses for departments, creating internship/ externships, requesting portfolios, providing intercultural undergraduate research opportunities, forming co-curricular experiential learning opportunities, developing corporate or non-profit partnerships, building a bridge to graduate education, choosing well-articulated navigable systems for competency-based credit and personal improvement, encouraging new department or university missions fit with intercultural outcomes, suggesting second degree or minor degree opportunities, indicating departmental marketing advantages for a department with intercultural outcomes, increasing mentoring opportunities, and enhancing occasions for personal growth.

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Appendix 1. Factors and Items in the Go Cultural Assessment with *Chronbach Alpha*

*The items below begin with a stem combination of words such as *"I usually see/feel/experience/know/known as/think about ....."* For space the main content is indicated below.

	Chronbach Alpha
Communication Motivation	.72
… motivated to meet people different from my group	
… ready to engage communication with people from a diverse background	
Relationship Trustworthiness, Empathy	.73
… people outside my cultural or social background trust me when they meet me	
… known as trustworthy since I show tolerance with people from different groups	
Communication Initiation	.49
… enjoy starting conversations, even with people different from me	
… in a new environment, I look forward to conversations which meet necessary tasks	
Openness to Information	.82
… even when disagreeing with another person, people believe I am considerate	
… able to see alternatives and new points of view even as new cultural ways	
Flexibility	.42
… free to be flexible with differences or new cultural ideas, new approaches, or new values	
… can adapt to or change to suit different conditions or a different purpose	
Transition Ease	.85
… transitions and moves are easy for me at this time to start a new phase of work	
… am able to handle transitions in new places and major changes easily	
Relocation Motivation	.72
… although I recognize some disruption involved, relocation feels good to me	
… am very motivated to move into a new group culture and begin new projects	
Managing Uncertainty	.79
… having disorganization or ambiguity around me in a new place does not bother me	
… most people believe that I do well handling vagueness in new circumstances	

Innovativeness .51
… enjoy a person's thought patterns and ideas, even if it seems a little risky at first
… a future group or cultural experience, I am ready to risk trying new and creative ways

Social Inclusion .57
… cooperating with people from diverse cultural backgrounds seems very easy for me
… am a person who typically works to make social or technically diverse people feel welcome

Engaging Diversity .83
… at gatherings with strangers, I am at ease and effective
… in conversations of social differences like age or economics, I communicate effectively
… understand and empathize with other's ideas even if that person is extremely different from me
… no trouble finding the right thing to say in relationships with people with different backgrounds
… my interpersonal skills usually are effective with both males and females
… feel effective in relationships with people, even if I am not the leader
… understanding a diverse person's concepts is one of my strengths
… communicate effectively when engaging a person from a different ethnic background
… meeting an organizational leader, I am as effective as anyone else

Resilience and Communication Empowerment .74
… my view of the world suggests I can change many things by communication and perseverance
… in facing new circumstances, most people agree I persevere, despite difficult circumstances
… am not a person who gives up before an extremely difficult job is done; I stick things out
… people who know me report I continue steadily despite problems or difficulties
… close friends indicate that I am always someone who persists hard even with the unfamiliar
… circumstances don't cause me to avoid doing or saying what I can to argue for change if I need
… creating change has more to do with my attempts to communicate than with the situation
… am a person who perseveres; so, I disbelieve the motto "What is going to happen will happen"

Task Confidence in Culture .86
… confidence in my abilities to deal with diverse teams and cultures
… given my ability, I see myself as competent at influencing others in a team or future culture
… don't get frustrated or overly concerned about my performance
… when I express my ideas in a group, I often feel the ideas are valued
… feel pleased as I think about performing in alternative contexts
… don't worry about what other people think of me right now

Marital or Family Accommodation .76
… my spouse (if single, family members) warmly support my work now upcoming in the future
… my spouse (if single, family members) adapt to my diverse challenges of current or future work

Marital or Family Interaction .72
… my spouse (if single, family members) communicate(s) to solve current or future work problems
… my spouse (if single, family members) present(s) consistency to do current or future work

Transition Experience .77
… previous transitions/experiences with diverse cultures have taught me lessons, including adapting
… transitions of any type in the past influence what I need to know to face future cultural difficulties
… learned readiness in transition and energetic to change into a new culture, role, or surrounding
… a lot of things are going on, I am not overwhelmed by details of cultural transitions or new roles

Overall .93

Appendix 2. GCA Training Program Overview

GCA training involved five one-hour long sessions scheduled across an entire academic semester. The training model is simple, yet requires a certified GCA coach and educator proficient in intercultural communication competencies.

The GCA's 16 factors statistically cluster into five categories utilized for training purposes. These clusters are labeled below along with their corresponding factor group. During each session, the factors descriptions are read aloud by participant volunteers, and explained by the GCA coach. The overarching theme of each cluster is clarified and participants are asked to offer possible reasons why a person might have a low score in one or more of these factors. Nowhere during this process is a participant asked to disclose his or her individual scores, but to rather speak hypothetically. Once the coach makes a long list of potential reasons using a large screen projector or white board, participants are then asked to generate possible methods of increasing scores in these areas. This critical thinking portion of the training is imperative as it fully engages the participant in the process of developing tangible training methodologies. During and after a large list of possible training methods is generated from participants, the coach interjects comments based on sound research and practical experience.

Session #1 – Adapter
GCA factors of Transition Ease and Relocation Motivation.

Session #2 – Includer
GCA factors of Communication Motivation, Relationship Trustworthiness, Interaction Initiation, Social Inclusion, and Engaging Diversity.

Session #3 – Decider
GCA factors of Openness to Information, Flexibility, Managing Uncertainty, and Innovativeness

Session #4 – Changer
GCA factors of Resilience and Communication Empowerment, Task Confidence, and Transition Experience

Session #5 – Marital
GCA factors of Marital or Family Accommodation and Marital or Family Interaction
Questions related to these two factors are optional per IRB guidelines.

This training process allows participants to fully engage in the creative aspect of coaching, displaying for them essential tools for developing strong intercultural communication competencies.