Cultural Diversity, Competencies and Behaviour: Workforce Adaptation of Minorities

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The increasing mobility of people around the world has resulted in an increasingly culturally diverse workforce, particularly in Canada, where multiculturalism is embraced and government policies are enforced in order to ensure that the Canadian workforce is representative of its population in terms of race and ethnicity. However, there are still differences in employment conditions between minorities and non-minorities in Canada. Many organizations use competency modeling as a basis for employment decisions, particularly for managerial jobs, and some of the behaviours outlined in competency models can be linked to what has been identified as organizational citizenship behaviours (OCB). This use of competencies (and thus possibly OCBs) may be a contributor to the employment gap in Canada. Acculturation as a way to mitigate this gap is also discussed. More research in these areas needs to be done to bridge the gap between practice and theory.

Key Words: cultural diversity, acculturation, competency, OCB
JEL *Classification:* J61, J71

Introduction

Organizations are continuously seeking improved ways of selecting the 'best' people for a particular job or organization. Particularly in Canada, this activity has become a very complex task, as firms must make attempts to ensure that all people are given fair and equitable treatment, especially concerning the functions of selection, development, and performance appraisal. With the increased number of people from other countries entering the Canadian workforce, there is added emphasis on non-exclusionary and anti-discriminatory policies and procedures within the realm of diversity management. Two of the most important trends of the past decade are a continuously growing diverse workforce, and increased competition for businesses resulting from the globalization of markets (Jain and Verma 1996). The increased emphasis on the global corporation and the growing number of mergers and acquisitions of companies

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all over the world in all industries, requires an understanding and appreciation of a diverse set of cultures (Terrisse 2001).

In Canada, companies which are considered to be crown (or government-controlled) corporations or which fall under federal jurisdiction employing over 100 employees, such as banks, telecommunications companies, and airline and railway companies, must comply with Employment Equity legislation (Taggar, Jain, and Gunderson 1997). This legislation also covers the federal public sector (Employment Equity Act of 1995). Employment Equity attempts to eliminate systemic barriers to employment in the workplace, which may adversely impact four designated groups: women, visible minorities, Aboriginal people and people with disabilities (Employment Equity Act of 1995). All of these trends and issues place increased pressure on firms to create human resources policies and programs that avert discrimination against individuals on non-work related aspects with respect to the various functions within human resource management, particularly selection and performance appraisal. While legislation has managed to guide such policies and programs, there are still perhaps uncharted ways that individuals are being assessed and evaluated in organizations that are not caught through these formal procedures.

The Canadian Population

Recent statistics derived from the 2001 Canadian census data tabulated and summarized by Statistics Canada, demonstrate the substantial diversity in the Canadian population today. Consider the following facts (Statistics Canada 2003d):

- the proportion of those who were born outside of Canada (18.4%) has reached its highest level in 70 years (a fact that is also shared with the United States),
- over half of the immigrants to Canada are from Asia (58%),
- 77% of the immigrants who entered Canada from 1991–2001 are from countries other than European nations and the United States.

The largest proportion of immigrants during the 1990's came from China, followed by India, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Sri Lanka and Pakistan (Statistics Canada 2003a).

The figures above essentially represent only the immigrant population over the previous decade; this does not account for first-generation, second-generation, or later generations of immigrant populations. Since

1901, Canada has seen 13.4 million immigrants enter the country, resulting in several generations of citizens who are not of Canadian-, English- or French-born backgrounds. As of 2006, the Canadian population stands at around 32.5 million people (see www.statcan.ca).

The visible minority population in Canada has tripled over the past two decades, with a presence of nearly 4 million inhabitants (13.4% of total population) in Canada in 2001 (Statistics Canada 2003a). Visible minorities are defined as '... persons, other than aboriginal peoples, who are non Caucasian in race or non white in colour' (Employment Equity Act of 1995). This section of the population is growing at a faster rate than the total Canadian population overall, largely as a result of more immigrants coming from non-European countries than ever before. At this rate of growth, it is anticipated that by 2016, visible minorities will comprise 20% of the population (Statistics Canada 2003a). Thirty percent of the visible minorities are Canadian-born (Statistics Canada 2003a), which indicates that there are many individuals in Canada who are second- and third-generation descendants of immigrants. A related concept, ethnic origin, can also describe the Canadian population. Ethnic origin refers to the 'ethnic or cultural group(s) to which an individual's ancestors [belong]', and over 200 different ethnic origins were reported among Canadians in 2001 (Statistics Canada 2003a).

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE LABOUR FORCE

Nearly half (46%) of all immigrants arriving in Canada during the previous decade ranged between 25 to 44 years of age, indicating that they are of working age (Statistics Canada 2003a). Immigrants to Canada have been a central part of labour force growth and development, particularly over the past ten years. Nearly 70% of the labour force growth over the past decade was accounted for by immigrants who arrived in Canada during the 1990's and who reported themselves as being in the labour force at the time of the 2001 census (Statistics Canada 2003d). In terms of numbers, over 3 million people in the labour force (one-fifth) were born outside of Canada (Statistics Canada 2003d). In fact, Statistics Canada projects that if immigration continues at these rates, by 2011 immigration could conceivably account for nearly all of the labour force growth in this country (Statistics Canada 2003d). This is a very likely scenario, as the average age of the workforce is continuing to increase, while at the same time, lowered fertility rates in Canada over the past few decades have resulted in fewer young people entering the labour force (Statistics

Canada 2003d). Thus, Canada will have to become even more dependent on immigration to fill the expected skill shortages in various occupations, and this will produce an even more diverse labour force than the one we currently have.

The above descriptions of the Canadian population and their labour force implications illustrate the need for understanding and appreciating differences among individuals, particularly in the workplace. As the North American (and particularly the Canadian) population becomes increasingly diverse (Jain and Verma 1996), the labour market will, too, be comprised of an increasingly diverse group of people. Immigration policies have encouraged people of other nations to live and work in Canada, and over the years many immigrants have stayed and built families here, which means that some Canadians may experience a level of acculturation over the years that they reside in the country. Acculturation can be described as multidimensional, mainly focusing on the learning of cultural traits of the host/dominant culture by the minority or immigrant group (Kim, Laroche, and Tomiuk 2001).

THE CONTINUING EMPLOYMENT GAP BETWEEN IMMIGRANT AND CANADIAN-BORN LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPANTS

Despite the fact that there is a considerable amount of immigrants who reside and work in Canada, finding suitable employment has not been easy for this group, for a variety of reasons. There is a continuing gap in the employment rates and conditions between recent immigrants and Canadian-born persons, which has actually worsened over the past couple of decades (Statistics Canada 2003d). This gap peaked in 1996, when the differential between Canadian-born labour force participants aged 25–44 years of age (78.4%) and recent immigrant labour force participants from the same age category (61%) was 17.4%. This marginally improved over the subsequent five years, with a current gap of 16% between the two groups (Statistics Canada 2003d).

However, there have been some gains made by immigrants who have lived in Canada for a period of time. For those immigrants who arrived over a decade ago, the labour market conditions did improve; their employment rate experienced a 20% increase over that period (Statistics Canada 2003d), indicating that as immigrants continue to live in Canada, they tend to become more integrated into the labour market, which may be due in part to the acculturation process they experience during their tenure in Canada. However, it must be noted that by 2001, there was still

a gap of 7.5 percentage points between these immigrants and their counterparts who were born in the country (Statistics Canada 2003d). This still illustrates some level of inequality in the labour force between immigrant groups in general and workers who are born in Canada, with respect to labour market conditions. Considering the fact that Canada's immigration policy tends to favour entry to immigrants who are better educated and possess more skills (Statistics Canada 2003c and 2003d), there is little justification for the employment gap that exists between these two groups.

Recent Statistics Canada data indicate that immigrants to Canada contributed greatly to the educational profile of the labour force (Statistics Canada 2003c). More than 60% of the immigrants who entered Canada during the past decade possessed qualifications above secondary school (Statistics Canada 2003c), two-thirds of whom were trained at the university level (Statistics Canada 2003b; 2003c). This is higher than the percentage of the working-age population in Canada overall who have educational attainments above the high school level (53.4%) (Statistics Canada 2003c). Considerable proportions of immigrant males (43%) and females (26%) had post-secondary level schooling in technology-related and business-related fields of study in 2001 (Statistics Canada 2003c). This indicates that immigrants should be able to participate in those jobs that pay considerably well.

In Canada, the individuals who made the largest gains in earnings were those who had higher levels of education and increased work experience (Statistics Canada 2003b). This factor has influenced the gap in pay between immigrants and non-immigrants in Canada's labour force, but more dramatically than it should have. Recent immigrants' annual earnings are poor in comparison; recent male immigrants made about 63 cents for each dollar earned by Canadian-born males. The figure for recent female immigrants was 66 cents (Statistics Canada 2000b). In almost every occupational category listed in the census data, non-immigrants made more money than immigrants. Looking at skilled positions, for male immigrants, senior managers in the financial and business sectors earned just over half of what their Canadian-born peers made. For both male and female immigrants, both sexes earned less in all business and technology-related fields than non-immigrants (Statistics Canada 2000b), despite the fact that many of these immigrants had high educational levels, as discussed previously. There is some improvement in earnings for those who immigrated to Canada several years ago; there

is a steady increase in average salary for every year that an immigrant stays in Canada. This increase in salary may be due again, in part, to the acculturation that is experienced over the tenure in Canada. However, a non-immigrant male worker with a university education still earned nearly 40% more than his immigrant male counterpart living in Canada for ten years (Statistics Canada 2003b). While job tenure likely does account for this differential in wages, again, the gap should not be so high given that considerable proportions of immigrants to the country are highly skilled. The patterns for university-educated female immigrants as compared to their Canadian-born counterparts are the same, but the gap is smaller, with non-immigrants earning over 25% more than female immigrants living in Canada for 10 years (Statistics Canada 2003b).

HOW CAN THE DIFFERENCES IN WORKING CONDITIONS BE EXPLAINED?

Certainly there are a variety of reasons that can contribute to the explanation of the employment gaps identified above, including investments in human capital, tenure, socio-economic explanations, political reasons, etc. However, this paper seeks to identify another possible area that could contribute to why minorities do not occupy more lucrative positions. The promise of a better life with an enhanced quality of work life is an attractive proposition for people from other countries where the standard of living is not as high as the one experienced in this country. Many individuals seek to gain entry into Canada by accumulating educational and professional credentials, since such attributes increase one's chances of success of becoming a landed immigrant in Canada. However, the types of jobs these people find once they are granted entry into the country vary greatly, even with these particular qualifications. Many of the educated immigrants worked in lower-skilled jobs over the last decade as well as in high-skilled jobs. Higher proportions of university-educated immigrant males worked in various low-skilled occupations, such as taxi and limousine drivers, restaurant and food service employees, and janitorial workers, than educated non-immigrant males; for educated female immigrants, many worked as nannies or babysitters, housekeepers/homemakers, cleaners, and in kitchen helper positions (Statistics Canada 2003b). Conversely, fewer immigrants worked in higher paying managerial jobs, such as sales and marketing managers and senior managers in the financial and communications sectors, than Canadian-born workers. In nearly all cases, when compared to their

Canadian-born university-trained counterparts, recent immigrants had lower average earnings per year (Statistics Canada 2003b). From these figures it appears that, even with similar qualifications, immigrants are not getting the chance to attain the same levels of pay and status as those who are born in Canada, particularly when it comes to managerial-type positions. Managerial level positions often rely less on objective job descriptions and more on subjective, 'soft' skills – perhaps this is one reason for the discrepancies noted above.

While this discussion here relies on the employment situation in Canada for various minority groups, the patterns here are not only a Canadian phenomenon; there are significant employment gaps between blacks and whites in the us (Fairlie and Sundstrom 1999), and the Netherlands are facing increasing unemployment rates of ethnic minorities (Ashkanasy, Hartel, and Daus 2002). It is important to realize that the increased mobility of people and workers will be a concern for human resource practitioners and researchers in North America, and will also likely be important for other industrialized countries around the world as well, particularly with respect to human resources practices and policies.

Competencies in the Organization

Very little has been written in academic journals about the use of competencies in the workplace (Maurer et al. 2003), and in fact there has been little attention paid to work competencies within industrial-organizational psychology (Nikolaou and Robertson 2001). Edward Lawler iii (1994) wrote an exploratory paper over a decade ago outlining the apparent shift from the focus on jobs in the workplace to the new alternative of the 'competency-based organization'. The bulk of the research and literature development in the areas of human resource management, organizational behaviour, and their related fields and subfields still tends to hold the assumption that jobs are the 'basic building blocks' of organizations. This assumption has become fundamental to human resource management (hrm); the job paradigm appears to be the unifying concept for a number of human resource (hr) areas, starting with job analysis and job descriptions, which serve as the starting point for training, selection and compensation, in addition to other hr functions (Lawler iii 1994). The origins of the job-based approach to human resource management can be traced back to scientific management and the work of Frederick Taylor (Lawler iii 1994). The future

of this approach, however, appears to be looking less promising, as the mass production economy (upon which the job-based approach is established) is diminishing, and is being replaced by a global economy, augmented by continuous development and innovation in technology and process improvements (Lawler iii 1994).

Competency development is an area which seems to have advanced much further in practice than in theory (Maurer et al. 2003; Mirabile 1997). Examples of the development and use of competencies for selection, development, performance appraisal, etc. can be seen in various organizations (Tien, Ven, and Chou 2003; Warech 2002). The use of competencies has quickly become a 'hot topic' (Mirabile 1997), and it has also become prominent in other related disciplines; in many countries, for example, competencies are used to train doctors and assess their performance in the United States, Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom (Leung 2002). Reasons cited for the heightened use of competencies include the recessionary times of the 1980's and the subsequent development of strategies that were aligned with globalization of business during the following decade (Nikolaou and Robertson 2001; Sparrow and Bognanno 1993). As a result, then, many of the desired employee behaviours became job requirements, particularly for selection (Nikolau and Robertson 2001).

The emphasis on competencies in the workplace has implications for the way that work is currently designed in organizations. Lawler iii (1994) posits that the fundamental building block in organizations should be the individual, not the job, in order to match the current trend towards competency-based organizations. This in itself raises numerous research issues around how employees and job candidates must equip themselves to participate in firms that employ this perspective of work organization (Lawler iii 1994). This trend towards the widespread use of 'competency modeling' has caused much confusion among hr researchers as well as practitioners (Shippmann et al. 2000). The widespread use of competencies for a variety of human resource functions causes particular concern as there seems to be no universal definition or even common understanding of what competencies truly represent (Grzeda 2005; Stuart and Lindsay 1997). In addition, though organizations play a key role for competence development, organizations in fact tend to suppress, impede or fail to develop individuals' abilities to display such competence (Jurie 2000). Since it is not discussed widely in the academic literature, the little research that does exist describes com-

petencies as being cognitive, learned and behavioural in nature (Mirabile 1997; Tien et al. 2003; Weinert 1999). Some definitions include motives, values and beliefs (Mirabile 1997). The competency modeling approach can identify knowledge, skills and abilities that are core to an occupational group, a level of jobs in a firm, or the entire organization; this differs from job analysis, which is more focused on individual jobs, and is using that information to select and assess individuals for those particular positions (Shippmann et al. 2000). This competency-based method appears to be one way that organizations are attempting to deal with the diminishing usefulness of the job-based approach to performance management that Lawler III (1994) discussed almost ten years ago.

As a result of the lack of consensus as to a precise definition of 'competency', there are numerous examples of competencies that are employed in firms worldwide. A study published by the American Department of Labor and the American Society for Training and Development revealed the main competencies that American employers found desirable in workers; they included skills such as adaptability, personal development, group effectiveness and influential skills. In 1991, the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills found that interpersonal skills such as helping others to learn, serving customers, and participation were key workplace competencies that were deemed as essential skills to be learned (Tien et al. 2003). Other common skills identified include independent thinking (initiative), communication and sharing information, teamwork and cooperation, organizational commitment, building relationships and problem solving (Getting managers to lead safety 2002; Tien et al. 2003; Warech 2002). Some researchers and practitioners consider competencies to be 'soft skills' (Hogg 1993; Hunt 2002). Many of these 'soft skills' are skills that are characteristic of higher-paying, managerial types of jobs; the types of jobs to which many minority groups appear to have limited access.

The important issue in this paper is to understand that this tool is becoming widely advocated by firms and organizational consultants, and is used and implemented by a variety of organizations. But the scant literature that investigates or discusses competencies varies widely, and in fact conceptual ambiguity underlies the entire area of competency development and use (Grzeda 2005). What is interesting to note, however, are the similarities between many of the competencies identified by organizations and various aspects of organizational citizenship behaviours. These similarities have not been explored in the literature; it is extremely

important to see that while organizations may not explicitly demand organizational citizenship behaviours within their firms, they may be indirectly requiring such behaviours of their employees through the utilization of competencies and competency models.

Organizational Citizenship Behaviours

Job performance has been a rather elusive construct to define in the industrial and organizational psychology literature, despite the centrality of it to management research. While there has been considerable discussion of the 'criterion problem' (or the problem of pinning down, identifying and measuring the most accurate criterion that represented 'job performance'; Austin and Villanova 1992), little of the research explicitly outlined a definition for job performance. Campbell, Gasser and Oswald (1996) have contended that performance measurement should be aimed at studying behaviour rather than the outcomes; in fact they consider the two terms synonymous with one another (Campbell, Gasser, and Oswald 1996). Motowidlo, Borman, and Schmit (1997) argue that job performance should be measured through behaviours rather than outcomes or results, for two reasons: extraneous factors to employee behaviours can affect results, and psychological applications can be used to predict such behaviours (Motowidlo, Borman, and Schmit 1997). In addition, researchers have also suggested and confirmed that job performance is a multidimensional construct (Austin and Villanova 1992; Borman and Motowidlo 1993; Campbell, Gasser, and Oswald 1996; Motowidlo and Van Scotter 1994)

It has thus been proposed that the criterion domain of job performance contains elements of performance that incorporate behaviours, particularly those that extend beyond the critical actions necessary to accomplish a variety of job activities (Borman and Motowidlo 1993; Campbell, Gasser and Oswald 1996; George 1990; George 1991; Motowidlo, Borman and Schmit 1997). However, time and time again the personnel literature has emphasized task performance as the sole criterion to be assessed, without taking into consideration the behaviours that are outside of that realm (Borman and Motowidlo 1993). Organizational citizenship behaviours (Bateman and Organ 1983) have been defined by Organ (1988) as discretionary behaviours that promote the effective functioning of the organization. According to this definition, such behaviours are not enforceable requirements of the job, and therefore job incumbents cannot be punished if such behaviours are not exhibited (Organ 1988). While in theory this tenet of ocbs may hold true, in practice, assisted

by the recent popularity of competency modeling, ocbs are being demanded more and more on the job. The distinction between in-role and extra-role behaviours is becoming blurred (Podsakoff et al. 2000).

Over the past twenty years, the study of organizational citizenship behaviours (ocb) has become one of the most widely examined areas in the industrial-organizational psychology and personnel literature (Borman and Penner 2001; Haworth and Levy 2001; Podsakoff and MacKenzie 1997; Van Dyne, Graham, and Dienesch 1994), with a particularly strong focus on attempting to identify the various antecedents of ocbs (Bettencourt, Gwinner, and Meuter 2001; Rioux and Penner 2001; LePine, Erez and Johnson 2002; Podsakoff and MacKenzie 1997). The great interest in the topic has stemmed from a belief that organizational effectiveness can be improved through such behaviours; indeed, this has been demonstrated empirically (Podsakoff and MacKenzie 1997). Thus, in this paper, it is proposed that because ocbs are becoming a perceived requirement for a number of jobs by various employers, it is important to identify what impact these ocbs may have on the employment situation of Canadians with diverse cultural backgrounds in the workplace. It is also important to identify the antecedents that lead to various types of ocbs.

In the comprehensive review of organizational citizenship behaviours, Podsakoff et al.'s (2000), the authors identified seven common themes among the various models of citizenship behaviour: helping behaviour, sportsmanship, organizational loyalty, organizational compliance, initiative, civic virtue, and self development (Podsakoff et al. 2000). Many of these organizational citizenship behaviours, such as altruism, loyalty, and helping behaviours, can be linked to many of the competencies that organizations currently use to select, train, and appraise individuals. The 'overlap' in the ocb literature and the use of competencies in practice certainly raises a serious need to examine these two concepts. In fact, one study that looked at both ocb dimensions and competencies as predictors of job performance had also revealed statistically significant positive correlations between each of the ocb factors and competencies as well (Nikolaou and Robertson 2001). ocbs are often studied in organizations but are not usually mapped on the existing formal mechanisms for behavioural assessment in firms for research purposes.

Diversity Management and Acculturation

It is clear that from the above descriptions of the Canadian workforce and the focus on competencies and ocbs that the 'buzz word' of diver-

sity management is a reality that must be taken seriously (Greenwood 1994). As the literature currently stands, there are large gaps in the knowledge base of diversity in organizations (Ferris et al. 1999). While policies such as the Employment Equity Act and various diversity management policies may promote diversity within the workforce, HRM policies alignment often does not promote these goals (Ferris et al. (1996).

Multiculturalism and diversity in the workplace is a complex issue (Ferris et al. 1999; Greenwood 1994). Businesses operate with certain traditions and standards, while employees bring customs, beliefs, and values from a variety of different cultures and backgrounds. The question, then, is who must adjust? Are individuals to sacrifice, hide and change their cultural behaviours to conform to what is perceived to be important to organizations? Should people from diverse backgrounds, in essence, be penalized for what they have learned and understood to be acceptable during their early years of socialization (Greenwood 1994)?

As a result of the previous discussion, then, the main research questions that are being raised in this paper are the following: 1) are competencies and organizational citizenship behaviours related?, and 2) could the use of competencies in the workplace adversely affect certain cultural groups more than others? Again, it is important to stress that this paper is proposing a potential link between theory and practice in HRM research, along with developing a further understanding of the dynamics of diversity management in the work environment and the possible institutional prejudices that may lie in seemingly innocent organizational assessment frameworks.

While there are a number of studies devoted to investigating culture changes and the psychological adjustments members of ethnic groups must make, there is a definite lack of consensus on the concept of the immigration adaptation process (Kim, Laroche, and Tomiuk 2001). One original definition of acculturation can be identified as the phenomena that occur when those from different cultures encounter one another, resulting in changes in the patterns of behaviour of one or more groups (Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits 1936, 149). That basic definition seems to be a fitting description of the various concepts that surround sociocultural adaptation in the 21st century. The process of acculturation entails changes in behaviours, values, attitudes and abilities of an individual (Berry 1992; McMillan and Lopez 2000). One can extrapolate from this, then, that the longer an individual stays in a new setting (i. e. a country other than the home country), the more encounters with other cultural

groups, particularly the dominant cultural group, he/she will have. This will have implications for diversity management, and perhaps for the current selection, training and development policies in organizations.

Implications for Learning and Conclusions

This discussion serves to understand how organizations can foster diversity management, through providing and encouraging the proper learning content in their training and development programs. Culture is a socialization process; individuals learn behaviours, values, customs, rituals, etc. through growing up amidst others who share these same aspects; thus they are learned, not genetic. The same can be said for acculturation; once people of a different culture are exposed to other cultures, such individuals often adapt to the new culture by changing their behaviours, values, and attitudes as well. People continually learn how to adjust their own behaviours, depending on the cultural situations they face.

However, if the exhibition of ocbs can differ according to the upbringing of culturally diverse individuals, then there may be adverse effects on certain cultural groups as a result of the reliance (and over-reliance) on competencies for selection and development programs in the workplace. As managerial positions tend to be based more on the use of competencies than on other skills (such as manual dexterity, cognitive ability, etc.), the adverse effects may be more pronounced at such levels. As discussed in the beginning of this paper, visible minorities and immigrants have particular difficulties attaining such positions in Canada, and the use of competencies may play a role in this. Particularly with competencies which are often organizationally specific, political and cultural influences on the competency models may adversely impact those who are unfamiliar with them (Nordhaug 1988). In turn, this may foster discrimination, and organizations will have difficulties in attaining diversity management and Employment Equity goals.

So how does this provide implications for learning and development? If culture entails learned behaviours, acculturation entails learned behaviours, and competencies (and thus perhaps ocbs) entail learned behaviours (Evarts 1988), then these behaviours can be taught to any individual. If these managerial positions require certain competencies in an individual to result in high levels of job performance, then the onus is on employers and educational institutions (particularly business schools; Grzeda 2005) to make this training available, and deem this training as integral and important. While the North American culture may foster

many of the competencies that are desirable in organizations, various cultural groups and certainly new immigrants may not be exposed to these behaviours; however, if individuals can learn to adapt to the North American culture, then individuals can learn the competencies and ocbs that organizations desire, and this can give minority groups another tool to move up through the ranks in organizations and at least have an opportunity to engage in managerial level jobs. Trying to fill positions with the right numbers of minorities is not enough to be seen as an 'equal opportunity employer'; organizations and institutions must ensure that minorities and disadvantaged groups have the tools to rise to the top and succeed at that level. Given the popularity and widespread development and use of competencies in the workplace, there must be a call to find theory and widely recognized frameworks to base them on, to investigate on whether this competency usage could be discriminatory in nature, and to understand how organizations and higher institutions can leverage competencies to engage those workers with different backgrounds and cultures fairly to achieve organizational competitive advantage.

Conclusions

This paper attempts to bridge theory and practice in human resources management by taking the popular notion of competencies and competency modeling, suggesting potential links between competencies and ocbs, and outlining the possible effects of cultural backgrounds and acculturation levels on the exhibition of these behaviours. Podsakoff et al. (2000) had identified that future research needs to examine the causal relationships among proposed antecedents of ocbs, as most prior research has only examined the various identified antecedents as direct predictors of such behaviours.

Podsakoff et al. (2000) also emphasized the need to examine ocbs in a cross-cultural context. The authors note that there may be a variety of cultural effects that are possible, including the effect of culture on the mechanisms through which ocbs are generated and the strength and frequency with which ocbs are exhibited (Podsakoff et al. 2000). In addition, no research in the hrm and related literature analyzes the notion of acculturation as either an antecedent or mediator of culture and ocbs. As mobility and immigration increase among countries, understanding acculturation processes and levels will perhaps provide further insight into why immigrants and minorities continue to experience worse employment conditions and lower earnings than their non-minority counterparts.

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