RESPONSE

Global Leadership to Transform the World

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Abstract
Global leadership is sorely needed to transform the world, given trends such as climate change, water scarcity, and social unrest. We need leaders with multicultural sensitivity who will face paradoxes head on, invite new voices into the dialogue, and collaborate across sector and national boundaries to find more sustainable solutions. This response addresses 3 areas that garnered the most commentaries: competency models, paradoxes, and developing global leaders. We point out several neglected perspectives, including “being” and “individual uniqueness,” along with the absence of non-Western voices in the commentary dialogue. We challenge readers to raise their consciousness and shift from enabling status quo leadership to becoming change agents.

We thank the commentators for taking time to offer their perspectives and additional information. They raised thought-provoking issues and offered important reminders. We particularly appreciated the chance to learn about other models and new approaches such as the cultural metaphors introduced by Gannon (2012), which may be illuminating to other industrial–organizational (I–O) psychologists as well. Our collective wisdom was expanded by everyone who contributed.

Although some commentators presented their own models and frameworks to illustrate key points, we are concerned that no one really addressed the underlying issue of what changes our profession must make to support global leaders in a changing world. We had argued that four developmental shifts are required: developing multicultural effectiveness (MCE), becoming adept at managing paradoxes, cultivating the “being” dimension of human experience, and appreciating individual uniqueness in the context of cultural differences (Holt & Seki, 2012). Disappointingly, no commentaries addressed the issue of shifts per se; most focused on leadership roles, competencies, and paradoxes. Beyond arguing that all leaders are becoming global leaders, we believe an additional shift is underway that gives all people everywhere the chance to step-up as global leaders. This may be an especially paradoxical shift for I–O psychologists who do not manage anyone and may not see themselves as global leaders.

To underscore the importance of these developmental shifts, we will start by reminding readers about the context for global leadership. Then, we will address three areas related to our developmental shifts that garnered the most commentaries (i.e., competency models, paradoxes, and developing global leaders). We point out several neglected perspectives, including the absence of commentaries on “being” and “individual uniqueness.” We end by...
urging I–O psychologists to become change agents.

Global Context for Change

We believe our proposed developmental shifts are vital in the context of how our world is changing. As noted previously, the world is increasingly volatile, complex, and interconnected. This changing context is nicely illustrated by the following projections in a book on global trends (Done, 2012):

1. Global warming will continue and climate will change.
2. Water will become scarcer and food production will be impacted.
3. Biodiversity will continue declining while ecosystems are destroyed.
4. Geopolitical power will continue shifting toward BRIC economies.
5. War, terrorism, and social unrest will continue and may increase.

Given these trends, it’s time to acknowledge that our approaches to identifying, selecting, developing, and compensating global leaders may be flawed. Former and current global leaders have contributed to the status quo, to the global mess we are in today. Corporate leaders pursuing economic growth at the expense of environmental protection contributed to epic disasters impacting our global commons1 (e.g., the Fukushima Daiichi meltdown, the Deepwater Horizon oil spill). Our competency models have tended to idealize leaders who exercise power and control rather than the respectful engagement of an interconnected system. We have enabled business as usual by capturing existing leadership practices in our models without questioning where those practices are taking us.

We need new types of global leaders in the future to cope with all the complexity and change. We need leaders with multicultural sensitivity who face paradoxes head on, invite new voices into the dialogue, process growing amounts of conflicting inputs, and collaborate across sector and national boundaries to find more sustainable solutions. In this response, we want to raise consciousness about opportunities for shifting I–O thinking and practice so we can help transform the world.

Leadership Roles, Models, and Competencies

The majority of commentaries focused on various aspects of leadership competencies. We point to some of their more helpful approaches and suggestions below. However, we are still wondering whether and how people will shift existing competency models to help global leaders manage all the changes that lie ahead, particularly in the multicultural context. I–O psychologists must find a way to both appreciate current models and help people see what changes are needed. It may take some paradoxical thinking to challenge and change the entrenched competency model paradigm!

Global leaders work in the world of nonprofit organizations, education, and government as well as business (i.e., we didn’t just focus on business leaders), yet many commentaries presumed a business context. Our definition of global leadership wasn’t challenged but could have been misinterpreted. Global leaders interact with people and manage paradoxes in a variety of complex contexts. Dragoni and McAlpine (2012) correctly pointed out that global leaders need cognitive complexity, which we agree is especially helpful for leaders running a business. Smith and Lewis (2012) pointed out that this is required for dealing with paradoxes. So cognitive complexity is important for global leaders operating in all contexts.

Role frameworks were introduced by several commentators (Butler, Zander, Mockaitis, & Sutton, 2012; Hazucha, Sloan, & Storfer, 2012). Roles provide another way to view global leadership, but we see these approaches as more

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1. “Tragedy of the commons” arises when individuals and groups acting independently and in their own self-interest deplete a shared resource, when that is not in anyone’s long-term interest.
pieces of the elephant rather than a way to integrate other perspectives. Hazucha et al. (2012) deepened our understanding of global leader roles in corporate enterprises with their discussion about market responsiveness, global efficiency, worldwide learning, and corporate integration leaders. Butler et al. (2012) described how global leaders perform three roles simultaneously (i.e., boundary spanner, bridge maker, and blender) within and across groups. It would be challenging for any taxonomy to cover all roles that global leaders play in all contexts. Some role frameworks even treat “international executive” as a role of its own (e.g., MDA Leadership Consulting, 2006).

Several authors (Hazucha et al., 2012; Inceoglu & Bartram, 2012) helpfully shared their versions of global models and cited other sources where interested readers could get more details. Inceoglu and Bartram (2012) also challenged us to rethink whether competency models need to be changed. They noted that some leadership competencies could be shared by many countries to some extent—that we don’t have to throw everything away. In the wake of our call for a common taxonomy, we note that three of the four factors in the PDINH (Hazucha et al., 2012) and SHL (Inceoglu & Bartram, 2012) frameworks are quite similar (i.e., thought/vision, people/support, and results/success)—so those could offer a starting point for integration. Meanwhile, we cannot argue that competency models like these should not be used. We have seen plenty of models in the United States, UK, and Japan that were not conceived as global models but have been retrofitted for global use. When Christine McCarthy interviewed people in three multinational companies about their global leadership models, she found “the presumption of cultural literacy, and the resulting lack of cross-cultural competence among leaders, has only exacerbated the problem of implementation and adoption of the models” (2010, p. 267). Her dissertation illustrates some of the changes that need to take place.

Hazucha et al. (2012) pointed out that care is needed in developing corporate models and outlined a helpful process to ensure competency models are effective. They emphasized the importance of involving a global team in the process of creating models. We agree—and hope that people included on such teams will be empowered to question corporate leadership assumptions.

Despite Inceoglu and Bartram’s (2012) exhortation to consider MCE as part of the leadership context rather than treating it as a “separate, ill-defined competency,” we believe that the quest for a better definition must continue. Recently Sharkey, Razi, Cooke, and Barge (2012) concluded that “pragmatic flexibility: Adapting to cultures”—especially for anticipating the changing needs of customers—was one of five core qualities among the 5,000 global leaders they studied. However, we still yearn for approaches that integrate MCE throughout the model.

Consulting firms and corporations are often invested in protecting and preserving the status quo rather than developing new and different approaches. Gentry and Eckert’s (2012) ILT approach was refreshing in that regard. They courageously embarked on a new 360 research path to help people understand a variety of diverse leadership prototypes and gauge the alignment between expectations and perceptions. They emphasized that the “eye of the beholder” is important, as we did. We see their ILT approach as a helpful first step. We also appreciated that they acknowledged limitations to their approach.

Our critique of “inadequate validation research” sparked some questions and led one vendor to ask us for help. Sharing the article informally also triggered some cross-disciplinary debates that unfortunately didn’t make it into this journal because formal commentaries were not submitted. We hope such dialogue will continue and be expanded through various professional forums. We encourage readers to share and discuss these articles with colleagues in other fields so we
can wrestle with global leadership models together.

**Paradoxes**

Paradoxes are ubiquitous, but often create tension and discomfort when discussed. Thankfully, three commentaries addressed them head on. Several proposed additional paradox definitions, as follows:

“Contradictory yet interrelated elements that exist simultaneously and persist over time” (Smith & Lewis, 2012).

“A statement, or set of related statements, containing interrelated elements opposed to one another or in tension with one another or inconsistent with one another or contradictory to one another (that is, either/or), thus seemingly rendering the paradox untrue when in fact it is true (both/and)” (Gannon, 2012).

The first is a contracted version of their earlier definition, which we had included in our focal article. The second highlights the important difference between “either/or” and “both/and” thinking, which we had included in Table 2 in our focal article. These definitions should help us distinguish paradoxes from dilemmas or polarities.

We appreciate the sustained effort by these three academicians in focusing attention on paradoxes over the past few decades. Gannon (2012) has made an enormous contribution in developing 31 cultural metaphors and 93 cross-cultural paradoxes in his work. Smith and Lewis (2012) helpfully brought out the notion that paradoxical tensions can provoke feelings of fear and risk. Paradoxes are uncomfortable for Westerners, but that’s reality. We cannot continue ignoring them, especially given their contribution to global complexity and ambiguity.

The PDINH and SHL models covered about 60% of the paradoxes we had included in Table 1 in our focal article. Like most models, they say nothing about managing paradoxes per se. And as we have seen in other models, there is an implicit assumption that more is better, without acknowledging explicit tradeoffs between competencies. Inceoglu and Bartram (2012) talk about how both “transactional” and “transformational” competencies are needed in practice, depending on the context. Although global leaders will be required to deal with paradoxical ambiguity more and more, current models don’t highlight that as a priority area. However, Sokol (2012) showed that polarity mapping could be used as a tool for dealing with paradoxes when they arise.

Given the central role that paradoxes are likely to play in our global future, we are grateful that several commentators identified particular skills for managing paradoxes. Smith and Lewis (2012) provided an in-depth look at four skills: cognitive complexity, confidence, conflict management, and communication. Along with others (i.e., Dragni & McAlpine, 2012; Grossman, Shuffler, & Salas, 2012) we might argue that those skills are important for handling other aspects of global leadership as well, including business management and hostile conflicts. We are tempted to delve further into how these four skills can be assessed and developed, but that is beyond the scope of this response. There is clearly much more I–O work that could be done with paradoxes.

**Developing Global Leaders**

Several commentaries touched on the challenge of developing global leaders. We need different approaches for developing global leaders if we want them to become multiculturally effective and adept at handling paradoxes related to the global trends mentioned earlier. Development is vitally important if future global leaders are to transform the world.

Butler et al. (2012) discussed that global leaders are developed through the simultaneous performance of the boundary spanner, bridger, and blender roles. They made a good case for these three roles and provided a good description of role activities.
However, they didn’t describe how people learn to perform those roles—or say much about how performing those roles actually developed additional global leadership competencies. We invite others to build on their effort by proposing specific development strategies and experimenting with new approaches.

Gannon (2012) expanded our thinking when he provided a wonderful description about a sequential cross-cultural learning program that educates people about cross-cultural bipolar dimensions, cultural metaphors, and cross-cultural paradoxes. We are anxious to try introducing descriptive metaphors to help people go beyond evaluative bipolar dimensions—and think about the questions he developed for each of his 93 paradoxes. Gannon’s approach might serve as a good substitute for the developmental model we offered in Table 2 of our focal article. If organizations could adapt Gannon’s approach to fit their needs, it seems likely that better global leaders will result. Then multicultural competency would no longer be viewed as a “myth” by some I–O psychologists.

Sokol (2012) described his experience with a real case that illustrated how leaders might grapple with the global/local paradox to take more well-informed actions. He showed how polarity mapping could help people shift their understanding to see the interplay of competing values and better appreciate both poles—along with early warning signs of neglecting each pole—to arrive at better solutions. This methodology offers a promising approach that could help leaders engage people in dialogues about a variety of paradoxical situations.

After our focal article was written, the DELTA model was introduced as an approach for coaches to work with, motivate, and develop culturally diverse executives (Coultaas, Bedwell, Burke, & Salas, 2011). DELTA is an acronym for determining cultural values, employing typical coaching techniques, looking and listening for motivational needs and deficiencies, tailoring coaching techniques to motivational needs and cultural values, and assessing the effectiveness of the approaches used. Coultaas et al. (2011) highlighted the danger of coaches doing more harm than good due to their cultural blinders. In the wake of this article, we join Coultaas et al. in urging I–O coaches to cultivate “a deeper understanding of cultures (i.e., acknowledging individual differences) but also be able to adapt (i.e., individualize) coaching strategies for maximum effect when dealing with culturally different others” (p. 150).

We challenge readers to consider that we may need different approaches to develop different kinds of global leaders now and for the future. The current wave of social unrest and despair is prompting people in the Occupy Movement and elsewhere to question the current social order and demand changes. What if the public and private sectors began to merge? What if corporations began losing power and were no longer endowed with “rights” of their own? People have already begun working across borders to prevent tragedies of the global commons. We would love to see global wisdom councils replace corporate boards of directors—with a seat at the table for nature and the Seventh Generation.2 Global leadership development would probably look very different under that kind of scenario.

Neglected Perspectives

Cross-border wisdom exchange in terms of culture and professional fields is vital in preparing for future shifts that are underway because future global leaders may need what we are not aware of at all. Although we appreciated the nine commentaries that were written, we also recognize that some perspectives were omitted or neglected.

All commentaries were written by Westerners. We may all be viewing the elephant from the same angle—and that situation may continue until other voices join the dialogue. We may be missing some

2. “Seventh Generation” is an Iroquois concept which encourages the current generation to think whether their decisions would benefit the children seven generations into the future.
outside-the-box approaches and other contributions from people with BRIC\(^3\) perspectives who could help us understand what will be needed in the future.

There were no commentaries that addressed “being” or “individual uniqueness.” Although this could mean people agreed with our stance, we fear that was not the case. These areas might be beyond the comfort zone of many I–O psychologists who are more comfortable working with tangible behaviors in stereotypical situations. We hope people in the I–O field will expand their awareness about alternative concepts and tools to be more effective globally. This will be especially important in working with people who speak English as a second language and rely on energetic presence more than verbal communication to understand the meaning of what is being communicated.

We join Ferdman and Sagiv (in press) in calling for greater dialogue and integration between the fields of diversity in organizations and cross-cultural work psychology. We challenge readers to share, discuss, and collaborate with colleagues in other fields and other cultures to deepen our awareness and expertise in helping global leaders.

**Final Thoughts**

We challenge readers to shift from enabling and facilitating the status quo regarding global leaders to advocating change. We are all facing the same global trends highlighted earlier, including climate change, water scarcity, and social unrest. Increasingly, we may need to deal with hostility inside our organizations as well as in the external environment as people compete for resources.

When China and India come to dominate the global geopolitical scene, and America’s thought leadership is challenged and Japan’s economic power is further weakened, what will global leaders look like then? Which of the four roles identified by Hazucha et al. (2012) will be most relevant or under siege in that scenario? Will that world be all about boundary spanning and bridge making ala Butler et al. (2012)? Or will we be engaged in continual economic chaos, hostilities, and warfare ala Grossman et al. (2012)—where global leaders will need competencies that go well beyond conflict management?

When groundwater tables have been drained, when rivers have been polluted with agricultural chemicals, and when 2.2 billion more people are competing for ever-scarcer natural resources, will people look back at 2012 articles like these and wish we had done more sooner to bridge our real cultural and economic divides—and develop even better global leaders? We need to collaborate with other disciplines in creating relevant leadership models, paradox frameworks, and tools for assessment and training that will equip global leaders to navigate all the changes ahead. We need to raise our consciousness and step up as global leaders ourselves to change some of our paradigms before it’s too late for the sake of the Seventh Generation who will inhabit the Global Commons.

**References**


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Gannon, M. J. (2012). Sequential cross-cultural learning: From dimensions to cultural metaphors to

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3. BRIC is an acronym for the countries of Brazil, Russia, India, and China, which symbolizes the shift in power away from the G7 economies toward the developing world.
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