Development of the Cross-cultural Readiness Exposure Scale (CRES)

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Abstract:

Perspectives of individuals who are involved in cross-cultural and cross-societal communications can be very insightful in facilitating authentic intercultural interactions. The Cross-cultural Readiness Exposure Scale (CRES) was developed to capture the level of readiness of individuals prior to intercultural interactions. The initial items were generated from focus groups involving undergraduate and graduate students in the United States. The items were pilot tested on a convenience sample of participants from various countries of the world. The CRES had sufficient validity and reliability, and can be used as a formative evaluation instrument to assess the level of readiness of individuals or groups who will be involved in intercultural interactions through study abroad, international service learning, internship abroad, or assignments in a foreign country.

Keywords: Intercultural competence, cross-cultural competence, global competence, intercultural communication, study abroad, working abroad

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Introduction

Traveling for assignment abroad or studying abroad requires the ability to adjust to a new cultural environment. The readiness for encounters from other cultures is critical to help someone experience meaningful intercultural communications. In other words, one should be able to respond appropriately to encounters of other cultures in order to experience meaningful intercultural communications. A lack of cross-cultural readiness may affect one's capacity to engage in effective cross-cultural interactions while being overseas. This study aimed to develop a scale to measure the main components of cross-cultural readiness exposure on separate subscales, with the intention of summing the subscale scores to create a total score that would represent a participant's overall level of cross-cultural readiness. To this end, the inquiry process proceeded by asking, "What are the factors that may be associated with one's readiness for cross-cultural exposure?"

Cross-Cultural Readiness: Review of Related Literature

Cross-cultural readiness exposure refers to one's ability to alter or adapt his/her cultural behavior based on the cross-cultural context (Dalton, Ernst, Deal, & Leslie, 2002). Cross-cultural readiness has become more and more critical, because globalization of communication has transformed the interactions and interrelations among people, nations, and cultures, thus altered the way people communicate to others around the world, especially when studying, working, or doing business in a foreign country (Gannon, 2004; Schmidt, Conaway, Easton, & Wardrope, 2007). Consequently, anyone interacting with others in a cross-cultural context or setting should be prepared or have some level of readiness for exposure to cultural differences, given the potential for misunderstanding and ineffective

interactions (Tuleja, 2005). Cross-cultural exposure has positive influence on the development of one's cultural awareness, especially with respect to a better understanding of other's culture, experiences, and behavior. The readiness to interact and accommodate effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds is very critical for students, faculty, and educators who have to deal with international education involvement (Martin & Nakayama, 2007).

According to Brinkmann and van Weerdenburg (2003), cognitive competence and behavioral effectiveness are essential for cross-cultural exposure. The concept of cognitive competence refers to the knowledge of appropriate communication behavior. Behavior effectiveness implies the ability to match expected outcomes of cross-cultural exchange with appropriate communication. In other words, there are some prerequisites that can be instrumental for effective cross-cultural interactions. Such prerequisites can foster a certain level of readiness that can enhance individual self-efficacy before an immersion or exposure in a cross-cultural setting, especially in a foreign country. Variables such as tolerance (Tucker & Baier, 1982), respect for other beliefs (Wiseman, Hammer, & Nishida, 1989), flexibility and empathy (Dodd, 1987) are related to readiness for effective cross-cultural exposure. The less bias one has about other cultures, the more it is possible to interact in meaningful way with people from different cultural backgrounds.

Lustig and Koester (2006) argue that one can be highly competent and effective in one situation and be moderately competent and effective in another situation. Therefore, a state or level of readiness for cross-cultural readiness does not necessarily guarantee effective intercultural interactions or communications. However, assessing such readiness is a good place to start. This can enable one to take actions to compensate for bias, if any, or increase

awareness about one's assets for meaningful cross-cultural interactions. In fact, Harris, Moran, and Moran (2004) found that cultural adjustment is associated with intercultural effectiveness. Several scales exist that aim to measure the understanding, view, feeling, or perception of individuals or groups regarding cultural differences.

Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI): The Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI; Hammer et al., 2003) was developed to measure intercultural competence of individual and group based on a developmental continuum from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism, which includes five cultural orientations: DD (denial and defense), R (reversal), M (minimization), AA (acceptance and adaptation), and EM (encapsulated marginality) (Hammer & Bennett, 2001). According to Bennett (1993), individuals who become interculturally competent or sensitive may lose their cultural identity and develop a new identity different from one's cultural background. Sparrow (2000) explained that it is not possible for an individual to completely dispose of one's native culture. Obviously, cultural orientations of individuals may change. However, this change does not occur in a vacuum. Individuals still carry with them frameworks of their native culture, which provide meaning to their new cultural identities. As Shaules (2007) argued, it would be an oversimplication of intercultural experience to think that people go through rigid stages of intercultural development up to an end-point. Numerous studies have used the IDI, and confirmed its validity and reliability (Abbe et al., 2007; Greenholtz, 2000; Hammer, Bennet, & Wiseman, 2003; Paige, Jacobs-Cassuto, Yershova, & Dejaeghere, 2003; Olson & Kroeger, 2001). However, concerns expressed by Shaules (2000), Sparrow (2000), and other scholars (Bredella, 2003) suggest that additional studies, including the development of alternative instruments can help complement the IDI.

Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory (CCAI): The Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory (CCAI; Kelley & Meyers, 1995) was developed to predict the ability of individuals to adapt to other cultures. Researchers have used the CCAI to assess cross-cultural sensitivity (Majumdar, Keystone, & Cuttress, 1999; Cornett-DeVito & McGlone, 2000; Sinicrope et al., 2007). Davis and Finney (2003) examined the psychometric properties of the CCAI, found poor fit of data for the four-factor model proposed in the scale, and recommended not to use the instrument (Davis & Finney, 2006). The weaknesses identified in the CCAI point to the need for additional research, including the development of alternative or complementary instruments.

The Intercultural Sensitivity Inventory (ICSI): The Intercultural Sensitivity Inventory (ICSI) was developed to measure the ability of an individual to modify his/her behavior in culturally appropriate ways during intercultural interactions (Bhawuk & Brislin, 1992). The ICSI measures constructs such as individualism, collectivism, and flexibility and open-mindedness. The ICSI has been validated through its utilization in various studies (Bhawuk & Brislin, 2000; Sizoo & Serrie, 2004). However, Kapoor, Blue, Konsky, & Drager (2000) have challenged the reliability of the ICSI, arguing that the items used in the scale are abstract in tone and substance.

Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS): The Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS) was developed by Chen and Starosta (2000), and includes five dimensions: (1) interaction engagement, (2) interaction confidence, (3) respect for cultural differences, (4) interaction enjoyment, and (5) interaction attentiveness. Studies have found the ISS to be valid and reliable (Fritz, Mollenburg, & Chen, 2002; Peng, Rangisipaht, & Thaipakdee, 2005). Although the validity and reliability of the ISS have been documented, McMurray (2007)

found that items in the scale such as “I think my culture is better than other cultures” and “I don’t like to be with people from different cultures” had “extremely high standard deviations” (p.70). Therefore, a challenge remains about the loaded nature of some of the items in the scale.

Overall, the aforementioned scales sought to assess whether an individual or a group is interculturally sensitive or competent for intercultural interactions. However, they all have flaws or weaknesses in one way or the other, which provides a scholarly opportunity for additional research or the development of alternative or complementary scales to assess the level of readiness of individuals or groups to engage in meaningful cross-cultural interactions.

Scale Development

An initial list of 58 items related to intercultural readiness when traveling to a foreign country was generated based on literature review and exploratory interviews with a dozen administrators of study abroad programs. The items were categorized in two themes based on their similarities with cultural relativism or ethnocentrism. An instruction statement and a Likert-type scale (Davis, 1992) was added, asking potential respondents to rate their level of agreement with each item, on the extent to which they (a) strongly agree, (b) agree, (c) neutral, (d) disagree, and (e) strongly disagree. Two focus groups of 9 participants each were conducted with students selected on a convenient basis, in order to generate additional items. Participants were international students from Central America and the Caribbean, attending an international program on community leadership. This strategy was used to ensure the relevance criterion of the items (Beck & Gable, 2001). Based on feedback received from the focus groups, 6 items were removed due to their irrelevancy and redundancy. Participants in

the focus groups made recommendations that enabled revision of the remaining 52 items for clarity and potential for cultural bias.

The Content Validity Index (CVI; Polit and Beck, 2006) was used to estimate representativeness, comprehension, ambiguity, and clarity. Tilden, Nelson, and May (1990) suggested that the CVI values should be ≥ .70. The Kappa index (Wynd, Schmidt, & Schaefer, 2003), with a value > .40, was used to assess relevance. A panel of 8 professors teaching courses such as cross-cultural competence, research design, globalization and higher education, and international education, were asked to (a) review the items for clarity and consistency, (a) make recommendations for retention or rejection, and (c) suggest corrections for retained items (if needed) or new items to be included in the scale. A total of 7 items were considered to have insufficient content validity (CVI < .70 and Kappa < .40 in representativeness and/or relevance). The remaining 45 items were retained. The panel suggested nine sub-themes. The nine sub-themes were: (a) racism bias, (b) discrimination bias, (c) ethnocentrism bias, (d) prejudice bias, (e) stereotype bias, (f) international curiosity, (g) cultural relativism, (h) intercultural communication, and (i) intercultural sensitivity. Table 1 provides a concise definition of each sub-theme:

Table 1

Definition of Cross-cultural Readiness Exposure Sub-themes

Sub-theme	Definition
Racism bias	Personal preference that inspires an individual in making or supporting unfair judgment about others based on their race.
Discrimination bias	Personal preference for giving or supporting differential treatment to others based on an unfair demographic categorization.
Ethnocentrism bias	Personal preference for judgment or supporting judgment that considers some ethnic groups or cultures as inferior in comparison to other ethnic groups or cultures that are considered as superior.
Prejudice bias	Personal preference for rigid or unfavorable attitudes toward a particular group without regard to facts.
Stereotype bias	Personal preference for preconceived or oversimplified generalizations regarding the beliefs or behaviors of a particular group.
International curiosity	Curiosity to seek information about foreign countries and cultures.
Cultural relativism	An understanding or support for the idea that there is no right or wrong culture, no inferior or superior culture, and cultural practices, experiences and behaviors should be examined in the context of a particular culture.
Intercultural communication	Ability to communicate either verbally or non-verbally with people from different cultural backgrounds or experiences
Intercultural sensitivity	Ability to show tolerance, respect, appreciation, flexibility, understanding, and empathy when interacting with individuals from different cultural backgrounds.

The sub-themes could be easily categorized in factors that may deter cross-cultural readiness exposure (racism bias, discrimination bias, ethnocentrism bias, prejudice bias, and stereotype bias) and factors that may foster cross-cultural readiness exposure (international curiosity, cultural relativism, intercultural communication, and intercultural sensitivity). The panel members were invited to express their level of agreement with the sub-themes. Kappa values were calculated, using the Software Package for Statistical Analysis (SPSS; Altman, 1999). The Cohen's Kappa values were .46 for racism bias, .45 for discrimination bias, .48 for ethnocentrism bias, .49 for prejudice bias, .50 for stereotype bias, .54 for international

curiosity, .55 for cultural relativism, .48 for intercultural communication, and .51 for intercultural sensitivity. All Cohen's Kappa values were significant ($p < .0.001$), thus confirming the relevance of the sub-themes (Wynd, Schmidt, & Schaefer, 2003).

Pilot Testing of Items for the CRES

The 45 items were used in a pilot testing, which involved 12 undergraduate and graduate students at a large Southern university of the United States, in order to ensure further construct validity. Participants answered a series of open-ended questions about processes relevant to cross-cultural readiness, tailored to explore each of the main components of the construct. The purpose of the sessions was to identify whether an individual is ready for cross-cultural interactions. Participants were asked to express their level of agreement with each of the 45 items. Participants then gave feedback about the items in terms of their comprehensibility and relevance to the topics just discussed in the group. Participants were instructed to check any items that seemed unclear or confusing. Also, participants were asked to confirm or infirm their level of agreement with each retained item based on the extent to which such item will contribute to the measurement of at least one facet of an individual readiness for effective cross-cultural interactions. All the items were considered to have sufficient content validity, CIV $\geq .70$, based on criteria suggested by Polit and Beck (2006).

Methods: Participants and Procedures

A total of 387 participated in testing the scale. Participants were selected on a convenient basis in settings such as university campuses and academic conferences. Some participants completed a hard copy questionnaire. Other participants completed the questionnaire online, through survey monkey. About 70% of the participants were females and 30% were males. Also, 25% of the participants were undergraduate students, 56% were graduate students, 10%

were administrative staff working in international education programs, and 9% were college faculty members. The majority of the participants were citizens (70%) or residents (88%) of the United States. The remaining of participants were citizens or residents of Australia, Canada, Cape Verde, Chile, China, Columbia, England, France, Ghana, Haiti, Kenya, Mexico, Scotland, South Africa, South Korea, and Spain. The age groups of the participants were diverse, with 11% under 25 years of age, 37% aged 25-34, 35% aged 35-44, and 17% 45 years or older.

Results

Data were screened to ensure the validity of the observations (Polit & Beck, 2006). The researcher removed from the sample any observation with one or more incorrectly answered validity items. The data were analyzed for normality (skewness and kurtosis) and reliability (Cronbach's alpha). A total of 9 items were excluded from the analyses because they had skewness or kurtosis greater than 2.00. A two-tailed alpha level of .05 was set a priori and used for all statistical tests. The Cronbach's coefficient alpha value for the entire scale was .79. This is a reasonable Cronbach's alpha value based on the criteria suggested by George and Mallery (2003). All 36 retained items of the CRES have good alpha values as well. Table 2 provides means, standard deviation, and factor loading for each item.

Table 2

Items and Factor Loadings for CRES Subscale Factors

#	Item	*M*	*SD*	*Factor loading*
1	Developing countries would have no political problems if they fully adopted a European or American system of democracy. *(Reverse coding)*	2.57	1.010	.791
2	Racism is still an issue in many parts of the world.	4.35	1.071	.800
3	People who have completed their prison time should not be denied any social, economic, or political opportunities.	3.68	1.148	.787
4	People in poor countries tend to have relatively low self-esteem. *(Reverse coding)*	2.10	.890	.789
5	Sometimes discrimination is justifiable. *(Reverse coding)*	1.96	1.100	.792
6	I would seize the opportunity to attend an activity on international topics or issues, learn a foreign language, or participate in a program abroad.	3.85	.995	.780
7	If I judge people based on my own cultural standards, I will make inappropriate judgments about their cultural behaviors.	4.15	1.069	.791
8	I have the ability to quickly develop relationship with someone from a different cultural background that I meet for the first time.	3.23	1.160	.793
9	I always ask people questions to better understand their cultural values.	4.08	.807	.790
10	It is naturally better to marry someone from my race. *(Reverse coding)*	2.18	.977	.792
11	I never miss an opportunity to learn about the history, life style, or culture of people from other countries.	3.85	1.080	.781
12	Older people lose the ability to learn. *(Reverse coding)*	1.90	.988	.777
13	Some countries have some silly food taboo. *(Reverse coding)*	2.61	1.090	.780
14	Study abroad programs have no academic value. *(Reverse coding)*	2.64	.790	.780
15	I always seize an opportunity to have a conversation with someone from another country or culture.	3.84	.962	.789
16	No matter what people say, most traditional religious rituals are simply unacceptable. *(Reverse coding)*	3.04	1.002	.775
17	I am willing to learn as many languages possible.	3.80	1.075	.792
18	I can work productively with people who have strong cultural differences with me.	4.25	.671	.790
19	Modern life style is obviously far superior to that of many traditional societies. *(Reverse coding)*	2.63	.918	.775

20	Most of the time people tend to over-react about discrimination. *(Reverse coding)*	2.68	1.272	.777
21	If I have to work with someone from a different culture, I will pay attention to word or attitude that may be considered offensive by that person.	3.29	1.080	.781
22	Employers should have the freedom to hire employees from ethnic groups or races of their choice. *(Reverse coding)*	2.25	1.315	.779
23	It is more convenient for people of same racial or ethnic backgrounds to socialize together.	2.70	1.166	.776
24	Study abroad, learning about other countries, cultures, or global issues have no value for people who plan to work only in their own country. *(Reverse coding)*	2.28	1.262	.795
25	My country would be friendlier if there were less ethnic groups. *(Reverse coding)*	1.73	.939	.785
26	Each culture is unique and should be judged accordingly.	4.28	1.022	.805
27	People who are gay, lesbian, or bisexual should hide their sexual orientation. *(Reverse coding)*	2.49	1.289	.773
28	I have no bad feelings about the beliefs, values, and practices of people from other countries.	3.66	1.115	.801
29	Some races are obviously smarter than others. *(Reverse coding)*	1.60	.986	.774
30	People who are suffering because of their own bad decisions should not expect to receive public assistance. *(Reverse coding)*	2.05	1.008	.784
31	Women who like activities that are traditionally dominated by men are likely to be lesbians. *(Reverse coding)*	1.58	.889	.777
32	I am not willing to work in group with people who do not show up on time to a meeting.	1.54	.852	.774
33	Judgment made about an unknown culture is likely false, misleading, and arbitrary.	4.03	1.066	.783
34	People of some races work harder than others. *(Reverse coding)*	2.37	1.228	.782
35	To better understand the behavior of people from other countries, one needs to understand their norms and values.	4.18	.839	.788
36	It is very difficult for me to understand why some societies are still attached to some old cultural practices. *(Reverse coding)*	2.53	1.095	.769

Also, the subscales have reasonable Cronbach's alpha values (George & Mallery, 2003). As Table 3 indicates, internal consistency reliability was .71 for racism bias, .95 for discrimination bias, .74 for ethnocentrism bias, .83 for prejudice bias, .80 for stereotype bias, .77 for international curiosity, .888 for cultural relativism, .81 for intercultural communication, and .89 for intercultural sensitivity. All the items in each subscale had loadings that are greater than .60.

Table 3

Subscales Cronbach's Alpha Values

Scale/ item	**Chronbach's alpha**
Racism bias	**.71**
Racism is still an issue in many parts of the world.	.87
It is naturally better to marry someone from my race.	.65
Some races are obviously smarter than others.	.68
People of some races work harder than others.	.67
Discrimination bias	.88
Sometimes discrimination is justifiable.	**.95**
Most of the time people tend to over-react about discrimination.	.79
Employers should have the freedom to hire employees from ethnic groups or races of their choice.	.77
My country would be friendlier if there were less ethnic groups.	.78
Ethnocentrism bias	**.74**
Developing countries would be better off if they fully adopted the European or American model of democracy.	.86
Some countries have some silly food taboo.	.70
Modern life style is obviously far superior to that of many traditional societies.	.72
It is very difficult for me to understand why some societies are still attached to some old cultural practices.	.69
Prejudice bias	**.83**
People who have completed their prison time should not be denied any social, economic, or political opportunities.	.96
It is more convenient for people of same racial or ethnic backgrounds to socialize together.	.68

People who are gay, lesbian, or bisexual should hide their sexual orientation.	.67
People who are suffering because of their own bad decisions should not expect to receive public assistance.	.66
Stereotype bias	**.80**
People in poor countries tend to have relatively low self-esteem.	.86
Older people lose the ability to learn.	.68
No matter what people say, most traditional religious rituals are simply unacceptable.	.67
Women who like activities that are traditionally dominated by men are likely to be lesbians.	.78
International curiosity	**.77**
I would seize the opportunity to attend an activity on international topics or issues, learn a foreign language, or participate in a program abroad.	.81
I never miss an opportunity to learn about the history, life style, or culture of people from other countries.	.68
Study abroad programs have no academic value.	.65
Study abroad, learning about other countries, cultures, or global issues have no value for people who plan to work only in their own country.	.74
Cultural relativism	**.88**
If I judge people based on my own cultural standards, I will make inappropriate judgments about their cultural behaviors.	.97
Each culture is unique and should be judged accordingly.	.79
Judgment made about an unknown culture is likely false, misleading, and arbitrary.	.76
To better understand the behavior of people from other countries, one needs to understand their norms and values.	.77
Intercultural communication	**.81**
I have the ability to quickly develop relationship with someone from a different cultural background that I meet for the first time.	.84
I always seize an opportunity to have a conversation with someone from another country or culture.	.72
I am willing to learn as many languages possible.	.70
I am not willing to work in group with people who do not show up on time to a meeting.	.80
Intercultural sensitivity	**.89**
I always ask people questions to better understand their cultural values.	.93
I can work productively with people who have strong cultural differences with me.	.81
If I have to work with someone from a different culture, I will pay attention to word or attitude that may be considered offensive by that person.	.81
I have no bad feelings about the beliefs, values, and practices of people from other countries.	.86

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to develop a scale to assess the readiness for exposure to cross-cultural settings, particularly in a foreign country. The construct of nine factors of the Cross-cultural Readiness Exposure Scale (CRES) was derived from literature review and discussions among panels of experts. The CRES has sufficient construct validity and reliability to be further tested, for example in research related to students participating in study abroad programs or professional who are preparing to travel for overseas assignments. On the other hand, international education administrators can use the CRES as an assessment tool to help participants uncover biases related to readiness for cross-cultural interactions. Zimmerman (1995) argued that contact with host national is one of the most important predictive factors for successful adaptation to a new culture. Obviously, one must be cross-culturally ready and prepared in order for such contact to be effective or successful. The CRES can provide information to make such assessment at the pre-departure stage. The sample involved in the study was homogeneous to some extent, because the majority of the participants were either citizens or residents of the United States. Further studies may help confirm the validity and reliability of the CRES. The CRES does not intend to replace previous scales such as the Behavior Assessment Scale for Intercultural Communication (Olebe & Koester, 1989), Intercultural Competence Scale (Elmer, 1987), the Cross-Cultural Sensitivity Scale (Pruegger & Rogers, 1993), the Foreign Assignment Success Test (Black, 1988), the Intercultural Developmental Inventory (Bennett & Hammer, 1998), the Cross-Cultural Sensitivity Scale (Pruegger & Rogers, 1993), the Intercultural Sensitivity Inventory (Bhawuk & Brislin, 1992), the Intercultural Sensitivity Inventory (Bhawuk & Brislin, 1992), the Prospector (Spreitzer, McCall, & Mahoney, 1997), the Intercultural Sensivity Survey (Towers, 1991), and other

similar scales. Instead, it aims to provide an additional framework to assess one's readiness to engage in authentic intercultural interactions.

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