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Ethics and Responsible Leadership

# Transculturalism and Leadership Excellence

## Evaluation of the Transcultural Profiler

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## MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

This study evaluates a values-based leadership development tool named the “Transcultural Profiler”. The instrument has been developed to measure and strengthen the transcultural competences needed for managing and leading global teams with culturally heterogeneous members. Our inquiry focused on the validity and conceptual soundness of the tool.

Preliminary document analyses revealed that the term transculturalism had not been clearly defined for the profiler. Our consequent theoretical analysis first illustrates how contemporary scholars conceptualize the notion of transculturalism, and depicts the current conceptual restrictions thereof. By means of an etymological analysis, this study tries to overcome these limitations, and provides a theoretical innovation to the debate by differentiating between a “weak” and a “strong” understanding of transculturalism. Whereas the former, with Welsch (1999) as its main proponent, accentuates the passive side of transculturalism and describes it as a condition; the latter emphasizes its active side and denotes it as a particular type of action. As an action that *crosses* and *transcends* the specific ethic of any culture in social interaction, transculturalism, with an attempt to include its prior conceptualization as a hybrid condition, is defined as *the competence to effectively deal with moral particularism by contextually implementing ethical universalism*. This results in a situation-specific, and therefore, temporary cultural atmosphere for social interaction, facilitated by the integrative behavior of transculturally competent leaders. In this sense, transcultural competence is the behavioral proficiency to establish a common working culture based on the sharing of local experiences.

Recommendations for the development of the Transcultural Profiler are 1) to design and implement intercultural case studies that move the tool’s mere assessment of attitudes more onto the behavioral level, and 2) to include the respondents’ co-workers in evaluating their skills in creating a transcultural atmosphere for sharing experiences. By taking these aspects into consideration, the LTCP can become the leadership development tool that transforms a mere *awareness of values* into more *behavioral commitment* to actively establish a culture by developing transcultural competences as a crucial part of Leadership Excellence.

## Diagnosis of the Global Economic Playing Field

In today's modern societies, social interactions are embedded in and significantly shaped by the consequences of a lasting globalization process. These consequences are most notable in the increasingly complex praxis of overseeing, understanding and managing the global web of different, as well as common cultural interests. This requires a sophisticated form of management that is able to bring together various cultural backgrounds and to cultivate a new cultural self-understanding – one that could be coined as *global culture* (cf. Küng et al. 2010).

Diverse cultural backgrounds of people have a significant impact on the working conditions of organizations and, as a consequence, on the people in charge of managing those conditions. The complex network of a firm's diverse moral resources (cf. Wieland 2014, p. 205) provided by its internal and external stakeholders thus becomes particularly important. Companies function as hubs of these moral values (e.g. integrity, respect and fairness), whose motivational patronage and structural implementation can be discovered across all cultures. However, the differing meaning of these values is often the result of an individual or local interpretation (cf. Appiah 2006, p. 58), which makes it difficult for companies, and their executive management, to complete the required actions in given situations. For the value creation process of companies, that is to say the creation of *shared value*, it seems to be crucial to develop a common understanding of the diverse moral resources by defining *shared values*. These values represent the collective moral interests among legitimate stakeholders, which eventually enable desired actions in specific situations. This applies particularly to economic cooperation in a global environment with a yet deficient and only emerging institutional frame of globally legitimate rules and norms (cf. e.g. Wieland 2014, p. 170). In these times, international companies are consequently searching for and exploring ways to avoid anomy in their international economic practice.

The identifying, shaping and fostering of shared values in companies thus becomes central to good leadership practice. The active establishment of shared values requires today's leaders to shift their focus from managing intercultural differences (cf. e.g. Cole & Salimath 2013; Comfort & Franklin 2011; Franklin & Spencer-Oatey 2011; Franklin 2007) to establishing transcultural commonalities (cf. Welsch 1999; Appiah 2006; Wieland 2010; Antweiler 2012). *Transcultural Leadership*, as the contemporary manifestation of *Leadership Excellence* in globalized business environments, can then be understood as the active engagement of firms and their leaders to foster the development of “a shared emotional and cognitive foundation” (Wieland 2015). This must be achieved with the often implicit moral resources of the various stakeholders. Since shared values are the product of shared experiences and transcultural interaction, they cannot be considered static in nature, but must rather be understood as resulting from a continuous, dynamic learning process. This requires transcultural leaders to sustainably reflect on the cultural realities that surround them (cf. Wieland 2014, p. 187). Only by doing this, the management of shared values can have a positive contribution to the firm's goal of *Creating Shared Value* (cf. Porter & Kramer 2011).

## Purpose of the Transcultural Profiler

The previous diagnosis had led the protagonists of the Leadership Excellence Institute Zeppelin (LEIZ)<sup>1</sup>, situated at the Zeppelin University in Friedrichshafen (Germany), to construct the Transcultural Profiler (LTCP). This leadership development tool is supposed to enable and foster the management of global values within international organizations. It intends to achieve this aim by first measuring the transcultural competences of leaders, and then by situating these findings within the broader frame of the daily organizational objectives. The tool thus serves as a catalyst furthering intra-organizational learning processes by identifying and developing transculturally shared values in companies. More specifically, the LTCP allows leaders to recognize the diversity of values that exist in their organizations, and address the question as to how leaders currently *act upon* and *with* this diversity. In this process it becomes clear which values a company wants to share in the first place, since not all values are of the same importance for every company. So understood, the LTCP functions as a bridge between the *descriptive analyses* of a firm's currently lived values, from an individual perspective, and the *development* of the transcultural competences needed to more effectively impact the shared value creation process at the organizational level.

The LTCP is grounded on a universal conception of humanity and is built on the ensuing nine fundamental values: *respect, empowerment, integrity, protection, co-operation, ethical leadership, fairness, development of people (wider community) and sustainability*. These values are considered to be globally accepted values<sup>2</sup> of good corporate behavior, which give the normative basis to the concept of transculturalism that has guided the development of the instrument. Due to its conception and configuration as a *self-assessment tool*, it builds on a rather *active participation* of the persons being examined. This means that, firstly, the items of the LTCP-questionnaire are formulated in such a way that requires the respondents to assess their attitudes toward the nine global values, and results in a *prioritized value scheme* (expressed in percentages that convey their value preferences). Secondly, managers must then contextualize their assessment data in the consequent feedback-coaching sessions, and thereby link the empirical results more concretely to their professional role and the relevant circumstances in their business environment. The respondents must hereby reflect on their transcultural skills that transform their value attitudes into the productive maintenance of their international work relations. The coaching allows the participants to receive feedback about their strengths and the potential areas of personal and professional growth.

To do this effectively, there must be a clear understanding of what transculturalism means. However, the document analyses revealed that this notion had not been clearly defined. Thus, to optimize the coaching sessions, it is imperative to get a clear idea of what the concept entails, which had been the aim of our theoretical analysis.

<sup>1</sup> The LTCP has been developed in cooperation with the Novartis Foundation for Sustainable Development, WorldWork Ltd. and Tata Interactive Systems Ltd.

<sup>2</sup> The nine global values are derived from the UN Global Compact (1999), the ISO (2011) 2600 SR guidelines, the UN (2011) Guiding Principles of Business and Human Rights and the Manifesto Global Economic Ethic (cf. Küng et al. 2010).

# Theoretical Study: Defining Transculturalism

## Inter-, Multi- and Transculturalism

According to Antor (2010), “the paradigms of interculturalism and multiculturalism will increasingly have to be viewed in connection with that of transculturalism, in order to avoid not only national or regional straightjackets, but also conceptual ones based on assumptions of relations between two or more distinct cultural poles” (pp. 9-10). Such a strategy of providing conceptual clarification by distinguishing various closely, and perhaps inter-related concepts, can also be found in Welsch’s (1999) work.

In his essay “Transculturalism - The Puzzling form of Cultures Today”, Welsch (1999) provides a rather historical and sociological analysis of transculturalism. By taking Herder’s traditional concept of single cultures as a focal point, Welsch wonders whether such a “uniform, folk-bonded and separatory” conception of culture can still be valid as a characterization of today’s modern societies (pp. 194-195). To be clear, Herder introduced his concept of homogeneous (national) cultures in the nineteenth century, and conceptualized cultures as closed and ethnocentric spheres – clearly separated from each other and excluding any foreign elements (Herder 1966, 1967). This view of “cultures as islands” had for a long time remained dominant (Welsch 1999, p. 195). In referring back to this traditional perspective on cultures, Welsch concludes that even today’s commonly known concepts of interculturality and multiculturalism, which have supposedly tried to overcome Herder’s traditional view of cultural homogeneity, still hang on to the narrow conception of cultures as spheres or islands – “they still conceptually presuppose it” (Welsch 1999, p. 196).

Notwithstanding their inherent similarity through a reliance on the traditional notion of culture, these two notions conceptually differ in their analytical focus – whereas interculturalism is understood as the encounter of two or more different cultures in general, the term multiculturalism specifies the location where these diverse cultures meet one another, namely within one society or organization (Welsch 1999). According to Welsch, both concepts thus a priori assume cultural confrontations and are inherently directed to deal with (only) those problems. So he states that “interculturality seeks ways in which such cultures could nevertheless get on with, understand, and recognize one another”, and multiculturalism, as the loci of these confrontations, “seeks opportunities for tolerance and understanding and for avoidance or handling of conflict” (p. 196). The latter observation is also shared by Cattle (2014), as he posits that “The multicultural model in Britain was noted for its emphasis on tolerance, equal rights and the avoidance of assimilation” (p. 313).

However, this “all too traditional understanding of cultures threatens to engender regressive tendencies which by appealing to a particularistic identity lead to ghettoization or cultural fundamentalism”, and in this sense “do nothing other than collide with one another” (Welsch 1999, pp. 196-197). Thus given his extreme one-sided and pessimistic view on this matter, Welsch concludes that from a normative standpoint we must get rid of both inter- and multiculturalism. He adds to this normative argument that these concepts are also rather descriptively incorrect, as “Cultures de facto no

longer have the insinuated form of homogeneity and separateness. They have instead assumed a new form, which is to be called *transcultural* insofar that it *passes through* classical cultural boundaries. Cultural conditions today are largely characterized by mixes and permeations” (p. 197). In further describing what this means, Welsch (1999) introduces the word hybridization to define modern cultures, and states that “For every culture, all other cultures have tendentially come to be inner-content or satellites” (p. 198, emphasis in the original). Thus transculturalism, for Welsch (1999), refers to the new globally integrated status or state wherein cultures nowadays *find* themselves.

It is at this point that one starts to encounter divergent opinions in the literature. So Cattle (2014) argues that “A new response is now necessary. First, there is a need to recognise the new reality - that the powers of the state have been substantially eroded, along with a simple national identity. But the opportunity that this presents now also needs to be exploited, by enabling people to come to terms with diversity through *intercultural* education and experience” (p. 312, emphasis added). In other words, scholars agree that modern societies cannot be considered anymore as homogenous, separatist and exclusionary – they are characterized by “inner differentiation and complexity”. According to Welsch (1999) this means that they “encompass a number of ways of life and cultures, which also interpenetrate or emerge from one another”. Scholars, however, do not agree on the concept(s) that best captures the descriptive and normative issues of this novel situation. For Welsch (1999) the new holy grail of concepts is transculturalism, for Cattle (2014) it is interculturalism, and for Meer & Modood (2012) it is multiculturalism. Meer & Modood (2012) in fact state that the concept of interculturalism does not bring about new ideas or a new type of discourse regarding the current cultural state of modern societies. In particular they posit “that while some advocates of a political interculturalism wish to emphasise its positive qualities in terms of encouraging communication, recognising dynamic identities, promoting unity and critiquing illiberal cultural practices, each of these qualities too are important (on occasion foundational) features of multiculturalism” (p. 175). But if Welsch’s (1999) understanding of inter- and multiculturalism was even remotely right, then this is not a surprising conclusion at all – the term multiculturalism presupposes interculturalism. The question now remains: how can we overcome such divergent conclusions with regard to the same cultural diagnosis of modern societies?

Thus according to the corresponding literature it seems that modern societies should be described as highly *differentiated*, *global* and *inclusive* – in other words, diametrically opposed to the traditional understanding of cultures. It appears that a mere anthropological, socio-historical and political analysis of the concepts inter-, multi- and transculturalism, does not give clear answers as to which of them is more adapted to describe and to normatively determine the current situation. Given the reasonable claims made by both Cattle (2014) and Meer & Modood (2012), we are skeptical with Welsch’s (1999) conclusion that the concepts of interculturality and muticulturality have become superfluous and obsolete. It is rather our contention that, just as inter- and multiculturalism still presuppose the traditional concept of single cultures, the term transculturalism also presupposes both inter- and multiculturalism. Given the aforementioned conceptual analysis, it seems that the highly differentiated form of modern societies is captured by the concept of interculturalism, the global orientation of

this differentiated multitude by the concept of multiculturalism, and that the increased inclusiveness as found in today's cultures is expressed by the concept of transculturalism. Such a conceptual integration of cultural notions would in fact fully be in line with Antor's (2010) methodological suggestion that "a certain amount of justified totalizing on a more abstract level will be required in order to uncover structural parallels, strategic similarities, etc. between cultural and political practices in different parts of the world. This 'strategic essentialism' alone will make possible concerted efforts of countering the new global discourse" (p. 9). The following paragraph intends to further clarify the inherent logical similarities and dissimilarities of the three concepts involved, as it aims to use their etymological roots to slightly readjust the existing meaning of those concepts.

### Re-conceptualization: Etymological Considerations

In the Online Etymology Dictionary (OED) it is stated that the word 'trans' stems from the similar Latin term 'trans', and is supposed to mean "across, over, beyond" (OED 2015a). It is thereby interesting to note that the OED also mentions that this word was "perhaps originally present participle of a verb \*trare-, meaning *to cross*" (ibid.). It is thus originally intended to serve as an *active notion*, which in a strong sense could signify a specific type of action, namely to cross or to go beyond. In a weak sense it could refer to a condition that either allows for such action or sprang from such action. This is in stark contrast to the term 'inter', which according to the OED comes from the similar Latin term 'inter' and denotes the more passive state of being "among, between, betwixt, in the midst of". In the same vein also the word multi, stemming from the Latin 'multus', seems to passively point to the quantitative appearance of a particular phenomenon, as it literally means "much, many" or "strong, great, numerous" (ibid. 2015b).

So the general idea behind transculturalism as an *active notion* seems to point towards a more dynamic cultural concept, in which cultures are neither pure nor static by nature (Welsch 1992, 1999, 2011). Instead, such an understanding depicts cultures rather as open systems that continuously communicate and interact with one another. It must be clear that from a historical point of view this approach is not completely novel (Welsch 2011).

What is new, however, is firstly, the rapid and enormous spread of the "weak understanding" of transculturalism as a *condition* that permits and/or arises from an increased hybridization process – "What once may have applied only to outstanding persons like Montaigne, Novalis, Whitman, Rimbaud or Nietzsche, seems to be becoming the structure of almost everybody today" (Welsch 1999, p. 198). One could say that in general there is an increased consciousness of the inter-entanglement of cultural practices. Wieland's (2015) metaphor of transcultural caravans is a great example thereof, as it represents "a medium of cooperation, of economic and intellectual exchange, and *human experience*" (emphasis added).

The second novelty, then, regards the as yet hidden "strong understanding" of transculturalism, which an etymological analysis seems to uncover, as it points towards an even more active dimension of the concept – it suggests the shared human experience

that characterizes the weak understanding of the transcultural condition as an *intended event* that can actively be created.

So in our analysis it is the encounter of differences that creates the opportunity for transcultural events to occur. This means that, on the contrary to Welsch's (1999) standpoint, the concepts of inter- and multiculturalism are indispensable for the possibility of transculturalism. Thus both the weak and the strong presuppositions of the concept transculturalism introduce two additional requirements that go beyond the current conceptual set-ups as can be found in literature – we call them (i) the dimension of cultural diversity, and (ii) the dimension of situational cultural learning. Based on Welsch's concept of transculturalism (Welsch 1992, 1999, 2011), the subsequent paragraphs further unfold what we dub the “integrative” theoretical framework of transculturalism, which readjusts and broadens our current understanding of the matter by reconstructing transculturalism as a continuous dynamic and active *discovery procedure*<sup>3</sup>.

### The Dimension of Cultural Diversity

Within the literature on culture and cultural interaction, the term diversity is an often used concept that describes the particularities of the diverse cultural compositions of groups and organizations. Even though the term is considered to be indispensable for the corresponding literature, it lacks a consistent and generally agreed definition, and therefore an approach or method for its measurement<sup>4</sup> (Ozgen, Peters, Niebuhr & Poot 2014). As diversity can in general be understood as a relational concept, referring to the group level by describing the distinctions among group members and the internal divisions within such groups (Ozgen et al. 2014), we follow Harrison and Sin's (2006) definition, which states that diversity is “the collective amount of differences among members within a social unit”. Against the backdrop of our highly globalized society, we posit that social units increasingly encounter more cultural and therefore mental model varieties. However, as Welsch (1999) had in fact used today's interconnectedness to argue for the demise of cultural differences, we must claim that our basic philosophical position is a Hegelian one, whereby one's identity cannot be grasped without stumbling upon difference – “Identity...contains therefore essentially the characteristic of Difference” (Hegel, 2001, p. 88). Therefore, as already stated in the previous paragraph, transculturalism a priori presupposes cultural diversity, meaning that if the latter ever vanishes, it makes no sense to refer to transculturalism anymore.

So with regard to further developing Welsch's (1999) weak conception of transculturalism, in particular by introducing the active element as contained in the strong understanding thereof, considerations of (i) the dimension of cultural diversity, as enabling further transcultural processes, conditions or events, become indispensable. It is argued here, in the words of Adam Smith, that even though cultures seem to converge and mix up at the social level (Cleveland et al. 2016), “the most dissimilar geniuses are of use for one another” (Smith 1994, p. 18), and that it is in our own

<sup>3</sup> The term “discovery procedure” refers to the work of Friedrich A. von Hayek (Hayek 1968).

<sup>4</sup> The most common method in literature to operationalize cultural diversity among people is the analysis of citizenships or countries of birth (Ozgen, Peters, Niebuhr, and Poot 2014).

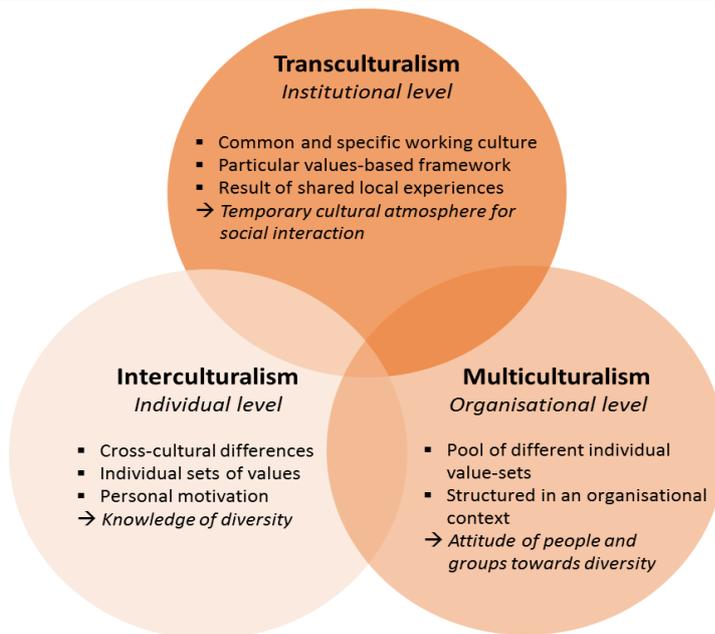
interest to make use of the “advantage from the variety of talents with which nature has distinguished its fellows” (Smith 1994, p. 18). This argument is also backed by contemporary research, which has shown that cultural diversity is not only conducive for creativity, but also for innovation and productivity (Almeida, Kogut 1999; Ozgen et al. 2011; Alvarez et al. 2011; Hewlett et al. 2013).

Friedrich von Hayek assents to this position when he states that the social process “which consists of the interaction of individuals, possessing different information and different views” (Hayek 1939, p. 36), is the source for dissent and the basis for intellectual progress that “to us represents the greatness of humanity” (Hayek 1939, p. 38). Thus both Hayek and Smith argue that it is the diverseness within societies and its apt opportunity for dissenting opinions, which builds the basis for competition, increased societal knowledge and innovation (Hayek 1939; Hayek 1968).

It appears that the “strong understanding” of transculturalism demands any transcultural framework to not exclude the concepts of inter- and multiculturalism – transcultural events can only be created by acting with and in diversity. In such a comprehensive cultural understanding, interculturalism takes place on the individual level and represents the *knowledge of diversity* in our globalized society; that is to say, it conceptualizes the awareness of cross-cultural differences and individual sets of values. Furthermore, these differing individual value sets, when pooled together in an organizational context, can be considered as being multicultural in the sense that they reflect the *attitude of people and groups towards diversity* at an organizational level. Transculturalism as the third and completing element of an overarching cultural conception might then be located at the *institutional level*, as both the condition and particular action enabled by inter- and multiculturalism.

At this level, the differing sets of cultural values among two or more individuals (interculturalism) interacting in a structured, organizational context (multiculturalism), are institutionalized in a common and specific working culture (transculturalism). This means that a particular values-based framework for social interaction, either implicit or explicit, both enables and becomes the result of sharing local experiences. In this sense one could state that transculturalism reflects a certain *cultural atmosphere* for social interaction. The *active establishment*<sup>5</sup> of such a cultural atmosphere, that is to say a common working culture that both emotionally and cognitively bond together a particular group of people within an organization (Wieland 2015), seems to be crucial for an efficient proceeding of intercultural transactions within a multicultural context. Thus, (ii) the dimension of a situational cultural learning process becomes a further important aspect of an enhanced conceptual framework of transculturalism. The following figure exemplifies these statements:

<sup>5</sup> This active notion of creating a specific cultural working environment for effective and efficient cooperation implies that there must be a particular behavior-related competence of individuals which could be described as transcultural competence.



**Figure 6:** Integrative Transculturalism<sup>6</sup>

### The Dimension of Situational Cultural Learning

Besides the previous conceptual readjustment of Welsch's (1999) theory of transculturalism with regard to (i) the dimension of cultural diversity, this paper further argues that there has to be a conceptual enhancement on (ii) the dimension of situational cultural learning. It is only when the divergent and diversely valued opinions are pooled together in a specific context, that transculturalism as a *temporary cultural atmosphere for social interaction* can exist. This must then be considered as both the enabler (active/strong understanding) and the result (passive/weak understanding) of *shared local experiences*.

First of all, the term *local* is crucial in this regard, as it refers to the situational character of cultural interaction. More specifically, it regards a selected group of individuals that in a specific situation and under a particular behavior-guiding framework – formal and informal institutions – are involved in a *social event*<sup>7</sup>. According to Karl Popper, it is the situational analysis of these social events that allows us to “explain and understand what happens in society” (Popper 1935, p. 358), or in organizations. Social events can either emerge intendedly or unintendedly, and because of their inherent local particularity, they (seem to) appear all of a sudden. From a broader perspective, understanding and becoming aware of these events is a prerequisite to reconstruct social realities (Popper, 1935), and can lead to organizational change. Furthermore, the inherent ad hoc and situational aspect of the active and strong understanding of transculturalism brings about a *temporary dimension* to its notion - what emerges all of a sudden could also disappear all of a sudden.

<sup>6</sup> Own figure.

<sup>7</sup> In this paper, the term social events is referring to the thesis of Popper (1935), who proposes that, for social science, the modelling of reality should be done by means of a situational analysis describing and explaining certain social events and therefore also society as a whole.

This relation between *social event* and *societal and/or organizational change* can also be applied to the more micro-analytical level of cultural interactions. Take for example a globally operating team that newly employs an external employee with a different cultural background (*cultural event*). According to our analysis, this requires a specific and situation-related re-institutionalization of the common working culture that is currently guiding the team (*cultural change*).<sup>8</sup> The emergence of such a novel common working culture can only result from the sharing of particular local experiences that refer to diverse cultural and thus mental backgrounds. So the enlarged cultural diversity that comes along with such a particular cultural event is not something “foreign” to the concept of transculturalism, but a necessary prerequisite for its realization. In other words: Cultural diversity actively drives transculturalism.

Secondly, also the term *shared experience* is very important in our analysis, as it points towards the possibility of an experiential commonality that can be realized within a multitude of differences. In this sense it is highly justified that Wieland’s (2015) concept of the *human experience* and its underlying basic notion of humanity, had served as the conceptual basis for the Transcultural Profiler. This human experience is intimately linked to a possible *shared understanding* (Suchanek 2015; Von Broock 2012) within multicultural teams – whereas the shared human experience accentuates the affective dimension, the shared understanding stresses the cognitive side of transculturalism. Transculturalism thus presupposes that actors can transcend the local particularities that differentiate themselves from each other. All parties involved must first of all *recognize* each other as beings of *equal worth* – one would otherwise not take the necessary pains to truly understand each other (as it costs energy to make sense of other people’s narratives). In the words of Küng et al. (2010), “Every human being – without distinction for age, sex, race, skin color, physical or mental ability, language, religion, political view, or national or social origin – possesses an inalienable and untouchable dignity...Being human must be the ethical yardstick for all economic action” (p. 155). In other words, transculturalism as an intended event necessitates actors to have a proficiency in dealing with moral particularism by giving contextual meaning to ethical universalism.

### **Transculturalism and Transcultural Competences: A Definition**

The innovation of our analysis consists in having made the differentiation between a weak and a strong understanding of transculturalism. Whereas the former accentuates transculturalism as a condition, the latter stresses the action(s) that might lead to and/or spring from such a condition. The active element thus introduces the notion of competences as inherently pertaining to the concept of transculturalism. As a result, besides having some reference to the transcultural condition, any definition of transculturalism must *also* mention the behavioral competences that enable transcultural actions. Based on the previous theoretical analysis, we hence define transculturalism as:

<sup>8</sup> This example was also illustrated by a BASF executive during a semi-structured interview that took place in Ludwigshafen on the 4<sup>th</sup> of November 2015.

*A temporary cultural atmosphere for social interaction that results from the competences to effectively deal with moral particularism by contextually implementing ethical universalism; that is to say, the behavioral proficiency to effectively establish a common working culture based on shared local experiences that fosters the efficient proceeding of intercultural transactions within a multicultural context.*

The behavioral proficiency thus consists in transforming the principle of humanity into a *productive* transcultural atmosphere for social interaction. This means that, first and foremost, the transculturally competent person is able to show his *respect* for humanity by treating both himself and others with dignity. In this sense we understand Valcour's (2014) account that "dignity is fundamental to well-being and to human and organizational thriving. And since many of us spend the majority of our waking hours at work, work is a major source of dignity in our lives...The enlightened leader knows to treat people with dignity". Sayer (2007) even posits that "our self-respect depends so much on how others treat us, particularly others with whom we associate on a regular basis", and that "the instrumental and unequal character of organizations make relations of respect and recognition, and hence dignified employment, difficult to achieve" (pp. 565-566). But how does the abstract competence of respecting humanity through one's actions materialize in somewhat more tangible competences?

According to Kant (1996)<sup>9</sup>, "In the kingdom of ends everything has either a price or a dignity. What has a price can be replaced by something else as its equivalent, what on the other hand is raised above all price and therefore admits of no equivalent has a dignity" (p. 42). In other words, it is the uniqueness involved in the autonomy of the various individual personalities as ends in themselves that ought to be respected. This means that, secondly, the transculturally competent leader must have the ability to be *open* to and to take serious account of the legitimate claims of others. In this sense we can understand the definition of transcultural competences as provided by the Modern Language Association (MLA) Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages, which posits that it is "The ability to comprehend and analyze the cultural narratives that appear in every kind of expressive form" (2007; p. 4). It must be noted that this definition is very complementary to the one provided in this study; in fact, it is analytically subsumed under our definition – the establishing of a common working culture based on sharing local experiences presupposes the MLA definitional requirements.

In further determining specific transcultural competences, we claim that it does not merely suffice to be open to other people's narratives – it must be done in a *friendly and positive* manner. The latter deduction also makes logical sense, as people are more inclined to share their stories to friendly and positive counterparts than to unfriendly and negative ones. Thus in order to establish a common working culture based on shared local experiences, this competence is rather indispensable for the transcultural leader.

It seems theoretically possible to further deduce many more specific competences that are needed to signal one's respect for humanity when interacting with others. Given the scope of this project, however, we must limit this noble aim and content ourselves with these three highly necessary, but probably not sufficient, competences. What must

<sup>9</sup> Translation by Mary Gregor.

always be kept in mind is that “While we can signal respect through how we talk to others and what we say about them, words are rarely sufficient” (Sayer 2007, p. 575). In further explaining this point, Sayer adds that “Expressions of quality of recognition which are not backed up by equality of treatment and distribution of resources, including job security and the provision of working conditions are likely to appear hypocritical” (ibid.).

### **Theoretical Conclusions: Integrative Transculturalism**

Transculturalism is a fairly new concept. According to Cuccioletta (2001/2002) “The South American scholar Fernando Ortiz originally defined Transculturalism in 1940” (p. 8). Contemporary scholarly debate, with Welsch as one of its main protagonists, has picked up on this idea, and further crystallized the conceptual specifics of this contemporary notion. Welsch (1999) had shown how the concepts of inter- and multiculturalism still presuppose the old traditional concept of culture as “uniform, folk-bonded and separatory”. Both from a normative and descriptive point of view, Welsch (1999) did not agree with this understanding of modern societies, and therefore conceptualized transculturalism as diametrically opposed thereto – it regards modern societies as differentiated, global and inclusive.

This study, however, has shown that such a narrow view of transculturalism is based on a mere weak interpretation of the concept – the core of transculturalism is *only* understood as a specific condition and not *also* as an intended action. Such an interpretation does not do justice to the etymological roots of the word ‘trans’, and de-emphasizes what in our view must be considered as most significant, namely the active element of the concept. When transculturalism is understood as something that can be constructed, then cultural diversity and its situational context become necessary elements thereof – transculturalism then presupposes both inter- and multiculturalism. This conception we label Integrative Transculturalism.

In this view, transculturalism is qua definitionem determined by effectively sharing local experiences. In other words, transculturalism as the temporary institutionalization of cultural diversity results from the active sharing of experiences between individuals engaging in intercultural transactions within a multicultural context. In this regard, transculturalism means creating a fruitful cultural atmosphere that enables compatible communication between different systems and/or diverse cultures (Luhmann 1987). As these cultural atmospheres in our globalized society are continuously changing, globally operating business leaders are facing an ongoing cultural fluctuation, resulting in even more cultural diversity. With regard to Leadership Excellence in the 21st century, this represents nothing else than another management task. Investing in the development of transcultural leaders thus at the end means investing in the Golden Rule, namely “in the conditions of social cooperation for mutual advantage” (Suchanek 2015, p. 12).

## Conclusions: Ways Forward for the LTCP

The aim of this study was to investigate the validity and conceptual soundness of the Transcultural Profiler – in other words, to answer the question as to whether the tool measures what it is supposed to measure.

The profiler has the intention to measure and strengthen transcultural competences. To do this effectively, there must be some sort of explicit definition thereof. At this moment, however, the profiler seems to be functioning with a rather rough working definition - it is conceived as the ability to look for common values in multicultural organizations, instead of merely focusing on cultural differences. Considering our theoretical investigation, this preliminary definition can be considered as pointing towards the right direction, but is not yet differentiated enough to be able to articulate the extent to which a user of the tool possesses the requisite competences. Furthermore, given our more elaborate definition of transcultural competences as the proficiency to construct a temporary cultural atmosphere for *social interaction*, we believe it necessary to include the respondents' co-workers in the feedback-coaching sessions – they are the ones really affected by their behavior, and can provide reasons for why they do or do not feel comfortable sharing their experiences in the team. This also closes the epistemological gap between that which the respondents think they effectuate, and that which really occurs. The point is that transculturalism is not an individual matter, and should therefore not only be tackled individually – the measuring of transcultural competences is an inter-subjective accomplishment, and thus highly qualitative in nature.

It would cost the organization time and money, however, to dispense more of its employees to the feedback-coaching sessions. And as the main goal of the profiling tool consists in the personal development of individual leaders, one could understand if the organization is not willing to make this investment. Therefore, we recommend constructing a prolific transcultural case study, which, for example, could be called “The Stash of Cultures”. This case study could either be added to the current questionnaire, or be an integral part of the feedback-coaching sessions. The benefit of the latter idea is that during those sessions the case study could be introduced and presented interactively by the coach, who then gets a glimpse of the ‘potentially actual’ behavioral tendencies of the respondent. This enables the observation of genuine feelings and instant situational cognitions when confronted with an intercultural dilemma. Being part of such a process increases the coach’s understanding of how the respondent deals with moral particularism by contextually implementing ethical universalism, and is then enabled to better recognize potential areas of personal and professional growth.

The Transcultural Profiler is the first of its kind, and if the diagnosis of today’s global economic playing field is somewhat correct, it has arrived timely. Even though in its current configuration it cannot fully fulfill its promise of measuring transcultural competences, by taking our advice into consideration, further steps will be made towards this aim.

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