

CREATING AN AUTHENTIC CULTURAL LENS USING CASE DIALOGUE

Bonita L. Betters-Reed
Simmons College School of Management
Bonita.Betters-Reed@Simmons.Edu

Lynda L. Moore
Simmons College School of Management
Lynda.Moore@Simmons.Edu

ABSTRACT

This proposed session will present an experiential exercise designed to teach the application of a multicultural lens through the use of case dialogue. A working model that compares a unilateral lens with a multidimensional lens across five factors will be shared as a foundation for interpreting selected dialogue from a case currently being written by the presenters. This case features a Korean born woman entrepreneur and CEO, Kija Kim, of a GIS firm with offices in Cambridge MA and Washington D.C. (See Appendix 1 for a more complete case description). Participants will be asked to analyze case excerpts that describe Kija Kim's leadership perspective, style, values, and motivation before and after the introduction of the model, Korean cultural context and suggestions for creating an authentic cultural lens. (See Appendix 2 for case excerpts and identification of cultural context). Ensuing discussion will focus on how to use this perspective and approach with case analysis and other teaching methods for an integrated and multidimensional understanding of business leaders and their behavior.

OBJECTIVES

1. To demonstrate how to use case dialogue to teach multicultural analysis and awareness.
2. To demonstrate an interactive case discussion methodology.
3. To provide an opportunity for the audience (and potential students) to experience a "different" voice of leadership, apply a diversity model and other diversity concepts.
4. To use an exercise to demonstrate learning in a fun and creative way.
5. To receive feedback on how to effectively use case dialogue (or other materials) as a teaching tool and refine the exercise preparation and implementation.

Target Audience: Flexible, will arrange small groups to accommodate session attendance.

Time Needed: 60 minutes or more

Materials: White board, flip chart or similar

Equipment: PowerPoint projection capability, Laptop or compatible projector for PC.

Room Set Up: Movable chairs, computer set up in front with projector screen.

SESSION STRUCTURE AND TIMING

- I. Introduction and overview of Session (5")
- II. Summary of case (5")
- III. Group Exercise – Small Group(s) Interpret Case Excerpts Using Traditional Leadership Lens (15")
- IV. Presentation of Cultural lens Model (15")
- V. Small Groups Revisit Case Excerpts & Apply Cultural Analysis Method (10")
- VI. Large Group Debriefing with Q & A (10")

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Cultural perspective and awareness is critical to understanding the 'lens' concept. This factor is based on sensitivity to the concept of culture as 'software of the mind', a complex cognitive concept or mental model that shapes assumptions of the world around us. (Hofstede, 1991)

My interest lies in the interaction of experience and thought, in different voices and the dialogues to which they give rise, in the way we listen to ourselves and to others, in the stories we tell about our lives. (Gilligan, 1982)

This exercise evolves from a conceptual framework developed for an invited chapter for the Handbook of Research in Entrepreneurship Education, which is a work in progress. Though the handbook and much of our recent work is grounded in the entrepreneurial field, we believe that the model contained in this approach will help

Developments in Business Simulation and Experiential Learning, Volume 33, 2006

educators and researchers better diagnose and resolve cross-cultural and gender challenges in various management disciplines. Drawing upon our 20 year scholarly partnership which specialized in diversity, our previous research that explored the “white-wash” dilemma in diversity research, teaching and practice (Betters-Reed and Moore, 1995), an extensive interdisciplinary and multicultural literature review on women business owners and from conducting case research on two minority entrepreneurs, we proposed a change model that compares a unilateral lens with a multidimensional lens across five factors. Together the factors of cultural perspective and awareness, academic discipline, success measures, language, and research approach help create a new lens that allows for a more complex understanding of how we study and teach about management. In our case we have been particularly interested in business leaders and their leadership context.

Although there is a much larger body of literature that supports the need to see management teaching and research in a much broader and richer context, four other cross cultural or diversity based scholars have greatly informed our work. Hofstede (1991) conceptualizes culture as “software of the mind”, a complex cognitive concept or mental model that shapes assumptions of the world around us. Without this awareness, or indeed this lens, we remain both parochial and ethnocentric in our understanding of our subjects and our teaching.

Nancy Adler underscores this issue in her work on international business and women entrepreneurs. She notes that although there is little doubt that the world of business education has gone global, the assumptions about building global businesses and succeeding as a global business owner remain parochial (2004). She too sees the need for a new multidimensional lens, one that not only considers cross-cultural complexities, but that also benchmarks the creative ways that companies and individuals are balancing and integrating their professional and private lives.

Additionally, the concept of voice originally brought to the forefront of gendered leadership scholarship by Carol Gilligan (1982), is critical to understanding the need to challenge the traditional models that currently dominate our teaching and learning in business education. Most of the writing on business leaders or entrepreneurs has failed to reflect distinctive cultural differences, context and experiences. Essentially only the dominant voice, or voice of authority is reflected or interpreted in our business “texts”. Not only have the real stories been lost or suppressed, but also if the teacher or observer does not have a multidimensional lens, they likely won’t hear or see beyond the culturally dominant model (Betters-Reed and Moore, 1995).

Peggy McIntosh’s early work suggests that the dominant models in the U.S. are infused by “white privilege...an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was meant to remain oblivious” (1988, 95). White people, ourselves included, operate from a unilateral lens because we never

have to think about being white and in some cases are ignorant about our own cultural heritage and aspects of identity. This plays out in our limited understanding of organizational dynamics, leadership and context or environment (Betters-Reed and Moore, 2005).

This exercise attempts to illustrate the importance of representing the authentic voice of the leader without interpretation of the teacher or researcher. The session will create cultural awareness of the participants and enable them to “see” the culturally determined lens through which they perceive the world. This powerful learning can translate back to the classroom to aid faculty in teaching cases and in using other educational materials. It is a tool to assist in the fight against the inherent ethnocentrism in much of our business and management publications and teaching materials.

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS/OUTCOMES

It is increasingly important in our global economy that we are able to teach students about the need for a global or cross cultural perspective. Domestically our highly multicultural workforce also requires a skill set to understand and communicate effectively with those different from us. In order to teach our students the importance of a cultural perspective the teachers themselves must be taught to focus on their own cultural limitations that impact their perception and interpretation of teaching materials. This exercise will elevate participants awareness of the importance of cultural intelligence and provide some concrete steps to create an authentic cultural lens through the use of case dialogue.

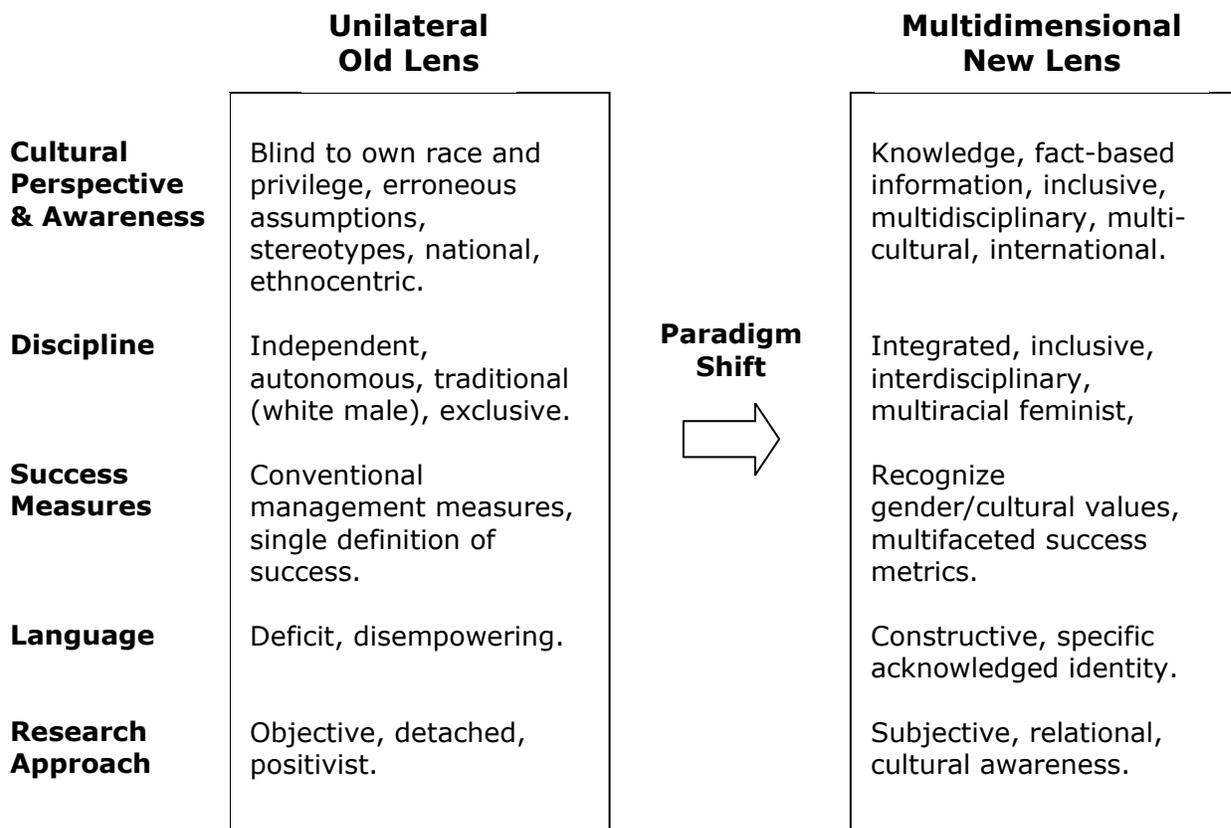
REFERENCES

- Adler, N. (2004). Women in International Entrepreneurship. In L.P. Dana (Ed.) *The Handbook of Research in International Entrepreneurship* (30-40). Cheltenham, U.K: Edward Elgar.
- Betters-Reed, B.L. & Moore, L. (1995). Shifting the Management Development Paradigm for Women. *Journal of Management Development*. 14:24-38.
- Betters-Reed, B., Moore, L. (Forthcoming). A Conceptual Approach to Better Diagnosis and Resolution of Cross-cultural and Gender Challenges in Entrepreneurial Research. Submitted to *The Handbook of Research in Entrepreneurship Education*, Alain Fayole (Ed.). Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.
- Betters-Reed, B., Moore, L. Davitt, M. (2005, June). *Lessons Learned about Cultural Impact on Leadership: Case of Kija Kim and Harvard Design and Mapping, Inc.* Presentation at the EAM-I 2005 Conference, Cape Town, South Africa.
- Chaibong, H. (1999/2000). Confucianism and Western Rights: Conflict or Harmony? *The Responsive Community*, Vol. 10:1, 50-58 .

Developments in Business Simulation and Experiential Learning, Volume 33, 2006

- Gilligan, C. (1993). *In A Different Voice*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Hofstede, G. (1991). *Culture and Organizations*. London: McGraw Hill Book Co.
- Jang, S. Y., Merriam, S. (2004). Korean Culture and the Reentry Motivations of University-Graduated Women. *Adult Education Quarterly*, Vol. 54:4, 273-290.
- Kim, A.E. (2000). Korean Religious Culture and its Affinity to Christianity: The Rise of Protestant Christianity in South Korea. *Sociology of Religion*, 61:2, 117-133.
- Kim, P. (2000). Korean Culture, *Horizons*, Vol. VIII.
- Lee, Z. (1999). Korean Culture and Sense of Shame. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, Vol. 36:2, 181-194.
- Yang, S., Rosenblatt, P.C. (2001) Shame in Korean Families. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, Vol. 32:3, 361-375.
- Young, G.Y. (2002). Seeking for Authentic Self in Community. *Pastoral Psychology*, Vol. 51:1, 87-94.

Change Model for Entrepreneurial Research and Education: Diagnosis and Resolution of Cross-cultural and Gender Challenges.



**APPENDIX I
KIJA KIM CASE OVERVIEW**

This case documents cultural origins of Kija Kim, the founder of Harvard Design and Mapping and the critical leadership challenges she faced throughout the development of the firm. In 1988 when Kija Kim started Harvard Design and Mapping, Inc., (HDM) women ran only 1 percent of the software firms in Massachusetts and only 8 percent were run by minorities. She is up front and clear about how these statistics impact the success of a business that like most is dependent on “connections, connections, connections. ...I’ve gone back and forth on whether being a woman, being a minority person or being an immigrant was the most difficult part of breaking into business” (Interview, March 26, 2004). Graduating first in her class at Seoul National University in 1965, attending Clark University for her graduate degree in Geography, working in civil and environmental engineering firms, marrying, raising a family and becoming a single Mother, was the foundation for her entry into the computerized map making world. While working for a real estate engineering firm, manually drawing maps, Kija Kim became excited about what was happening in the computer world. She told the firm’s partners that she would take on the responsibility of learning CAD and figure out how to integrate this “automation thing” (Interview, March 26, 2004). What happened next was “wondrous” as Kija figured out that her newly acquired skill of bringing automation to mapping was a hot consulting opportunity and she went out on her own (Interview, March 26, 2004). Borrowing \$15,000 from relatives, and offering partnership to a colleague, Jim Aylward who had the Marketing expertise she needed, Kija and Jim set up a small office in Cambridge Ma. “We were just the two of us starting from scratch, we didn’t have any contracts, nothing” (Interview, March 26, 2004).

Today HDM is a \$2 million a year business with 20 workers and offices in Cambridge Ma and Washington D.C. HDM has worked with nearly 20 US Government cabinet level departments and agencies, effectively utilizing the federal and state incentives for direct contracting and subcontracting. More recently a clear commitment to focus on core competencies characterized by an innovative combination of GIS services with cutting edge technology has positioned the company for success with large governmental agencies. Kija Kim was in Washington D.C. on September 11, 2001 with an appointment at the Department of Transportation about transit safety. Soon thereafter she met with her management team to strategize how to respond to this over night tremendous demand for homeland security. HDM captured important contracts with FEMA, The Department of Transportation and CDC.

Ms. Kija Kim, one of the first women to ever head a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) company, recently received the Woman-Owned Enterprise Award from the Department of Transportation in recognition of her significant contribution to the transportation industry and the nation’s economy. She was also named one of Enterprising Women’s Top Ten Women in Technology. Her broad civic involvement and socially responsible leadership is an important aspect of this case.

APPENDIX II

KIJA KIM CASE EXCERPTS BY CULTURAL CATEGORY

**THE ROLE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION
AND ITS IMPACT ON THE STATUS OF
KOREAN WOMEN**

In the early days, anywhere I go, I'm the only woman, literally in a lot of meetings, I'm the only woman. And a lot of people said, 'how do you feel being the only women?' So I said, it's great because they will all remember me . . . I won't remember any of them . . . I'm unique. I'm very unique."

--- Kija Kim (Interview, April 23, 2004)

"Kija leads by example. She has a very engaging personality. Everybody who has met her likes her. Everyone remembers her. Very often at the beginning, she would be the only woman, the only minority, in a group of contractors and she had the guts to stand up in the middle and ask a question and say, 'I'm Kija Kim from Harvard Design and Mapping . . . And there would be a crowd of 400 white males . . . and they'd look over and say, 'who are you, this new kid on the block, you don't look like everybody else.' And you know, in a very big way Kija used that to her advantage . . . She really used what other people claim as impediments to business, as her great advantage in business."

--- Jim Aylward (Interview, April 23, 2004)

**CONFUCIAN ETHIC: IMPORTANCE OF
COMMUNITY**

What makes me different is my activism, community involvement, involvement in my network . . . Trying to help it, and it also helping me at the same time. I really enjoy getting involved . . . I kind of feel satisfaction out of that. So I think that's the different " leadership.

My mother and Father were religious and I think to this day . . . my mother showed me to give a lot to the church . . . she had six kids . . . And she gave a lot to the church in donations. She said, 'If you were made rich enough to give, you will never be rich enough . . . You've got to give when you can' . . ."

--- Kija Kim (Interview, July 12, 2004)

**SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS AND GROUP
VALUES**

When we hired the new people in DC, we didn't have a lot of good Korean restaurants . . . But I found a tabletop barbecue Korean restaurant, and we used to take them and go out regularly . . . We also have a pizza lunch a lot too. And they thought it was one of the best. And once in a while, we go to IBM and take our people out and they (IBM employees) are really envious.

--- Kija Kim (Interview, April 23, 2004)

**CULTURAL MOTIVATOR – ROLE OF
SHAME**

I put the ball up, I put it up there, and so you have to perform, because I just don't tolerate incompetence, and they all know . . . If you're not competent, you don't survive if you're in HDM. It's kind of interesting. I take it as a complement, right?"

---Kija Kim (Interview, April 23, 2004)

LANGUAGE: WE RATHER THAN I

After September 11, I said, 'how can we take advantage of the situation? What can we do? How can our technologies be used? There has got to be a way we can position at this juncture.' So we laid out the context, the products . . . really went forward. We were able to say what we were focusing on and have people understand.

--- Kija Kim (Interview, April 23, 2004)

DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL DISTINCTIONS

I talk about this a lot with different contacts . . . About our social context, about the 'chip on the shoulder' . . . I see a big difference with people who came from high class, very well educated. . . the people like Wei or me, I'm the top of the class. I'm the smartest and I came here and I am better. So it's really a different attitude that people have. I know that a long time. I tried to make it, because my children were born here . . . make sure they don't have that chip on their shoulder. I try to give them the confidence, the self-esteem . . . It's different growing up (here) . . . people coming from other countries are better in that sense.

--- Kija Kim (Interview, April 23, 2004)