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Testing the Relationship of Career Enhancing Behaviors to Perceived Utility of Ethical and Cross-Cultural Competencies Across Two Independent Samples of MBA Alumni

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Sensitivity to cross-cultural management and ethics management have both been classified as important relationship-building competencies, with prior work also recognizing the need for MBA instructors to not only teach both competencies but to act as role models to their students. The two-fold purpose of this paper was to first develop a short, reliable Perceived Utility of Ethical and Cross-Cultural Competencies (PUECCC) scale by combining items measuring both competencies learned or practiced in a client-focused, team-based MBA capstone course. The second purpose was to test the relationship of a career-enhancing behavioral measure to PUECCC. Three binary behaviors, i.e., job interview, professional network expansion, and career change composed the career-enhancing behavioral measure. Using two separate samples of MBA capstone course alumni, support was found for a reliable two-item PUECCC scale and a significant positive relationship of the career-enhancing behavioral measure to PUECCC. Years of professional experience for both samples was also positively related to PUECCC. Ethical management and cross-cultural effectiveness are both important competencies to build into a curriculum to help MBA students develop to succeed at work.

Since 2017 enrollments at U.S. MBA programs have consistently fallen (Andriole, 2023), even at most top-ranked programs (Mandelbaum, 2023). There is particular pressure on lesser MBA programs to differentiate themselves more from what other programs are doing, including curriculum redesign, to make it timelier and more relevant (Andriole, 2023). As such having MBA coursework closely align with required managerial competencies to help MBAs become competent managers (Amblee, Ertl & Dhayanithy, 2023) is critical. Boyatzis (1982, p.21) defined competencies as "underlying characteristics of a person that lead to or cause effective and outstanding performance." Competency development is a graduate management education goal, educating managers to use knowledge to make things happen (May, 1999). Rubin and Dierdorff (2009, p. 211) identified six managerial behavioral competency categories desired by employers: Managing Decision-Making Processes; Managing Human Capital; Managing Strategy & Innovation; Managing the Task Environment; Managing Administration & Control and Managing Logistics & Technology. However, they also noted that the three most desired by employers – managing "strategy and innovation", "human capital", and "decision-making processes" were least emphasized in MBA programs. Varela, Burke and Michel (2012) speculated that this might be because business programs are more comfortable focusing on more "doable" intermediate (e.g., providing task-related feedback), rather than complex (e.g., intercultural competence), managerial competency development.

In their assessment of required curriculum alignment with coverage benchmarks, Amblee et al. (2023, p. 228) noted that "the managing human capital competency continues to be underrepresented in the required MBA curriculum." The human capital competency can be further broken down into components, including an interpersonal skills component. This interpersonal skills component includes ethics management and cross-cultural management, which Bedwell, Fiore and Salas (2014) have argued are critical for MBA students to be successful in the workplace. In the context of a client-oriented, team project-based MBA capstone course, the goal of this study was to develop a short scale for combining ethical management and cross-cultural management competencies, collectively labeled "Perceived Utility of Ethical and Cross-Cultural Competencies" (PUECCC), and to then test its relationship with a career-enhancing behavioral measure across two independent samples of MBA cap-

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stone course alumni. Prior studies have separately examined the competencies of ethical management and cross-cultural effectiveness, but never combined them in the context of their perceived utility to one's career.

In the sections that follow, through a literature review, an argument is made for combining ethical management and cross-cultural competencies using a pedagogical framework for developing a PUECCC scale. Then literature is reviewed leading to the second question asking if a positive relationship between a career-enhancing behavioral measure and PUECCC can be found. Study Method, Results and Discussion sections are then reported.

Combining Perceived Utility of Cross-cultural and Ethical Management Competencies

Jackson (2006) has maintained it is important to sensitize and teach students ethics while appreciating different cultural environments. Nelson, Poms and Wolf (2012) have described a writing-based course, including pre-tests and post-tests of ethics and diversity attitudes for developing their students' ethics and diversity management efficacy beliefs. In addressing each topic in their course, they noted the general issues of fairness, including the equitable and just treatment of individuals, as the commonality between ethics and diversity. Yukl (2006) noted the need for organizational members to be prepared to manage both ethics and diversity issues. The AACSB (2020) has listed ethics and integrity, and diversity and inclusion, as separate components of their guiding principles and expectations for accreditation.

A pedagogical framework for combining these two competencies is based on a competency taxonomy (Salman, Ganie & Saleem 2020, p. 722), in which competencies, using Boyatzis's definition (1982), are divided into hard competencies (i.e., knowledge-related, skill-related) and soft competencies (i.e., behavioral-related, self-actualization related). Cross-cultural competency falls under behavioral-related competency while ethical competency falls under self-actualization-related competency. Cross-cultural competency involves a person's ability to work successfully with people from different national cultural backgrounds either at home or abroad (Johnson, Lenartowicz & Apud, 2006; Salman et al., 2020). Ethical competency involves applying appropriate personal and professional values to make sound decisions in work-related situations (Cheetham & Chivers, 1996; Salman et al., 2020). According to Bedwell et al. (2014), cross-cultural management and ethics management would be classified as "relationship-building skills."

Competency development is a graduate management education goal, educating managers to use knowledge to be useful and to make things happen (May, 1999), i.e., there is a perceived utility. There are scales measuring intercultural sensitivity (Chen & Starosta, 2000; Hammer, Bennett & Wiseman, 2003) and ethical issues (Daniel, Elliott-Howard & DuFrene, 1997; Martin & Austin, 2010), but not their perceived utility which is the focus here. Cross-cultural career competency (e.g., intercultural skills) and ethical management competency (e.g., building trust) have been recognized as "knowing how" competencies by Cappellen and Janssens (2008) in their qualitative interviews with 45 global managers. However, quantitative scaling was not used to measure either competency (Cappellen & Janssens, 2008). In this study we propose to develop a very short scale combining the perceived utility of both ethical and cross-cultural competencies, which prior work has not done:

RQ1 Can cross-cultural management and ethics management competency items be combined into a short, reliable "Perceived Utility of Ethical and Cross-Cultural Competencies" scale?

Testing for a Positive Relationship between Perceived Utility of Ethical and Cross-Cultural Competencies and Career-enhancing Behaviors

Rubin and Dierdorff (2013, p.136), argued the need for a stronger exploration of the career context for getting an MBA, and posed the question, how can we foster more career awareness and enable students to more actively manage their career development? In a survey cited by Menlo Coaching (2022), the Graduate Management Admissions Council (GMAC), found that out of 3,600 MBA graduates, 87% of respondents indicated that their MBA degree opened job interview doors that increased their employability. In their qualitative study of interviewing 36 MBA graduates with managerial experience, Hay and Hodgkinson (2006) found that graduates defined career success as encompassing internal criteria, such as knowledge development, but also external criteria such as interviewing for employment opportunities. Cruz and Wood (2015) found that MBA alumni, across three part-time Brazilian MBA programs, credited their studies for increased confidence and success in managing network expansion as part of career progression. In their qualitative study of 18 female Taiwanese EMBA graduates (Chen, Doherty & Vinnicombe, 2012), respondents emphasized the benefits of network development from obtaining an EMBA. Hall (2011) documented the importance of different alumni events for building a stronger professional network in her analysis of MBA alumni networks. Hwang, Bento and Arbaugh (2011) found that completing a part-time MBA positively impacted industry -level career change. Collectively, these prior studies present evidence for an MBA, across different types of MBA programs, facilitating different career-enhancing behaviors, i.e., interviewing, network building and career change.

In his study of 382 consultants in two global professional service firms, Stumpf (2009) found that client assessments of trust and collaborative competencies helped to explain a consultant's career success promotion to business partner. Collaborative competency required cross-cultural awareness as consultants worked with international clients. In Cappellen and Janssens's (2008) study of global managers, interviewees felt that "knowing-how" competencies, including intercultural skills and building trust, could facilitate career progression. Collectively,

these two studies suggest that there will be a positive relationship between career-enhancing behaviors and Perceived Utility of Ethical and Cross-Cultural Competencies (PUECCC). However, prior research has not empirically tested this relationship.

Controlling for Demographic and Classroom Background Variables

Study samples consisted of MBA alumni who completed their capstone course. Since the course served as the background research context it was important to control for demographic and classroom variables prior to assessing the relationship between career-enhancing behaviors and PUECCC. Prior research has looked at the impact of demographic and MBA program variables on career growth variables (Cocchiara, Kwesiga, Bell & Baruch, 2010; Hwang, Bento & Arbaugh, 2011). Measuring such control variables, to help rule out alternative explanations, gives increased confidence when testing for a relationship between career-enhancing behaviors and PUECCC (Spector, 2021). This leads to the second study research question to be tested:

RQ2 Will there be a positive relationship between an MBA alumni career-enhancing behavioral measure and PUECCC beyond controlled for demographic and classroom background variables?

Method

Context - Problem Based Learning in a Client-oriented, Team Project-based MBA Course

Problem based learning (PBL) is an instruction method of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984), whereby students' competencies can be developed through learning by doing. PBL has been applied to client-oriented team-based projects involving MBA students (e.g., Cummings & Yur-Austin, 2022; Hill, Paris, Nash & Blau, 2020). The MBA capstone course serves at the research context for applying PBL to client-oriented, team projects. Refined over a number of years, this course was designed to develop employer-desired competencies. During the capstone, teams of closely supervised students developed evidence-based solutions to strategic problems identified by client organizations. A typical class consisted of one professor to provide structure and content; six to eight project teams, each with approximately five students; and for each group of students, an industry-experienced project executive (PE) each hired as an adjunct professor to coach the team. Although course readings and examples changed over time, the basic structure of the capstone course, including nature of the client-serving, live projects and the roles of the executive advisors and lead professor, did not change over the study period. During the study period, only five faculty taught the capstone, four for the entire time.

Initial Sample. Subjects and Procedure

Respondents were MBA alumni for the business school of a large public University located in the Mid-Atlantic United States who had enrolled in a required 3-credit capstone to graduate. This MBA program is not ranked in the top-tier (Baruch & Lavi-Steiner, 2015; Mandelbaum, 2023). In each course, students were organized into project teams, by client organization names. Respondents gave their names for this study to allow specific variables measured below to be captured, with the promise of complete confidentiality. A University Institutional Research Board (IRB) review indicated that because this research was part of a course evaluation, IRB approval and review was not needed (7/14/21). A Qualtrics aggregated-time survey was sent out to approximately 1300 respondents who had taken the course over a 9-year period. The survey data collection covered alumni who had taken the capstone course between Fall 2013 to Spring 2021 and included multiple reminders. Ultimately there were only complete 110 respondents, representing 9% (110/1300).

Validation Sample

This represented an independent sample of MBA alumni who completed the same required capstone needed to graduate. The same procedure was followed. These respondents completed the capstone course after the initial sample ended in Spring 2021, i.e., between Summer 2021 to Spring, 2022. A total n of 273 MBA students were contacted via non-work emails and 86 (32%) completed the survey. Repeated emails were used to contact respondents, and respondents were told they were eligible for a random drawing of ten $25 Amazon gift cards. These two factors, using non-work emails and gift cards, contributed to an improved response rate versus the initial sample.

Measures Used Across Both Samples

Demographic Variables. Three demographic variables were measured on the survey: gender; race, and years of professional experience. Gender was measured as 1 = male, 2 = female, 3 = Other/prefer not to say, 4 = other (fill in). Race was measured using the following categories: 1 = White, 2 = Black or African American, 3 = American Indian or Alaska Native, 4 = Asian, 5 = Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 6 = Hispanic, 7 = Other/prefer not to say. Years of professional experience was measured using one item which asked, "how many years of professional experience have you had?", which respondents answered on a sliding scale.

Classroom Background Variables. Three project background variables were measured: modality, MBA program type, and type of organization studied. Modality was measured as 1 = online, 2 = in-person, using records of when the respondent took the course. MBA program type was self-reported and coded as 1 = Global MBA, 2 = Part-time MBA, 3 = Online MBA, and 4 = Other, e.g., Executive MBA, full-time MBA. The Global MBA was a full-time cohort program. Part-time MBA represented students taking 1-2 courses/semester. Online MBAs could go either full-time (over 9 credit hours/semester) or part-time. With the semester and year that a course was taken, along with the student's name, this self-report data was verified by course enrollment records. Type of client organization

studied was rater coded 1 = profit, 2 = non-profit (including government), using respondent-identified organization names, indicating team placement. Career-enhancing Behaviors. Three specific behaviors were asked about: job interview, professional network, and career change using the lead in "in which of the following ways, if any, has your MBA capstone experience helped your career? Please check all that apply:" (1) used the capstone experience as part of a job interview, (2) expanded my professional network through the experience. (3) changed my career based in part on my capstone experience." Responses were No (0) or Yes (1). Respondents could check multiple behaviors.

Competency Items. Two items were asked, using the following general referent: "Please find two competencies and skills as identified by employers and/or MBA alumni as being developed by or practiced in this capstone course and respond to each on a sliding scale from 0 = Not useful in my career to 10 = Very useful in my career." This perceived utilization of competencies is based on May (1999). This was then followed by two items: cross-cultural effectiveness and ethical management. A slider scale has been shown to allow respondents to give more precise answers and can improve the reliability of an instrument (Chyung, Swanson, Roberts & Hankinson, 2018). The history for developing each item, i.e., cross-cultural effectiveness and ethical management, is based on competencies that the MBA curricula of AACSB business schools strive to develop, including the current MBA program (Nash, Hill & Anthony, 2018). Part of the rationale supporting the validity of these items was a prior survey of 200 employers who collectively indicated that both of these competencies were important for hiring and promoting MBAs (Nash et al., 2018).

It should be pointed out here that both "opportunities to demonstrate cross-cultural effectiveness" and "maintaining high standards of ethical behavior" were learning goals built in the MBA capstone course, which was team-oriented and client project focused. The syllabus clearly implied that the faculty were also expected to demonstrate cross-cultural awareness and in contrast to Hühn (2014), high ethical standards. In addition, a number of client projects involved companies and/or markets located outside of the US; and most classes included at least one project with an international component, allowing for comparisons between US and international business realities. Further, teams included students from diverse national and socioeconomic backgrounds, providing opportunities to work with demographic and cultural differences between project team members, clients, and faculty.

The need to maintain high ethical standards was also clearly stated as a learning goal and reinforced by the signing of both a professional statement of ethics and, in most cases, a non-disclosure agreement, as well as in conversations in which clients emphasized their expectations of confidentiality and discretion. Beyond client concerns, an important part of the learning around ethical management involved discerning the needs and interests of the various stakeholders in a project, integrating ethical considerations into organizational operations, and formulating well-argued responses to ethical dilemmas. Finally, a significant percentage (more in the initial sample) of the projects were for social ventures and nonprofits that grappled explicitly with issues of ethics and justice, and a smaller proportion for conventional firms grappling with environmental, social and governance issues. The presence of these projects within the class prompted conversations about ethics in business.

Data analysis

Frequency analyses are reported first. RQ1 was addressed by assessing the scale reliability. RQ2 was addressed using hierarchical regression analyses. Any required pre-recoding of variables to run the analyses will be reported prior to analyses. SPSS (2021) was used for all data analyses. Since RQ2 posed a positive relationship, a one-tailed test for significance was used with findings at a $p < .05$ or $p < .01$ value reported as statistically significant.

Results

Frequency Analyses

Table 1 reports the frequencies and percentages for nominal demographic and classroom background for both the initial and validation samples. Table 1 shows that the majority of MBA respondents for both samples were male, white, part-time, and from profit organizations. The initial sample had a lower mean for years of experience ($M = 13.53$) versus the validation sample ($M = 15.24$). A higher percentage of the validation sample studied profit organizations. Another difference between samples was for modality, the initial sample was mainly in-person versus online for the validation sample, due to Covid impact. For the three individual career-enhancing behaviors, although a scale reliability cannot be estimated, given nominal measurement of each behavior, there is a consistency of generally performing each career-enhancing behavior across samples, i.e., expanding professional network was done most often, then job interview, followed by career change, which makes logical sense, i.e., from easier- to harder-to-do. These behaviors were added into a three-item Career-enhancing Behaviors scale. The Mean (M) and Standard Deviations (SD), 0 = no, 1 = yes, were, initial sample $M = 1.29$, $SD = .93$; and for the validation sample, $M = 1.38$, $SD = .99$. The result of an independent samples t-test between these two means was, $t(194) = -.73$, $p = .47$, This indicates stability between these two scales.

Tests of Research Questions

The coefficient alpha reliability estimates for the two-item PUECCC scale, combining the cross-cultural effectiveness and ethical management items, were .81 for the initial sample and .82 for the validation sample. Since these estimates exceed the .70 threshold recommended by Hinkin (1995), RQ1 was supported. In addition, the de-

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics – Demographic, Classroom Background and Career-enhancing Behavior Variables

Variable	(n = 110) – Initial Sample	(n=86) – Validation Sample
Gender		
Male	n = 76 (69%)	n = 48 (56%)
Female	n = 34 (31%)	n = 38 (44%)
Other/Prefer not to say	n = 0 (NA)	
Race		
White	n = 77 (70%)	n = 59 (71%)
Black or African American	n = 13 (12%)	n = 11 (13%)
American Indian/Alaska Native	n = 0 (NA)	n = 1 (1%)
Asian	n = 10 (9%)	n = 8 (9%)
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	n = 0 (NA)	n = 0 (NA)
Hispanic	n = 7 (6%)	n = 3 (4%)
Other	n = 3 (2%)	n = 0 (NA)
Prefer not to say	n = 0 (NA)	n = 4 (5%)
Years of Professional Experience	M = 13.53; SD = 7.47 range = 1 to 36 years	M = 15.24; SD = 7.49 range = 4 to 37 years
Modality		
Online	n = 40 (36%)	n = 70 (81%)
In-person	n = 70 (64%)	n = 16 (19%)
MBA Program Type		
Global	n = 30 (27%)	n = 4 (5%)
Part-time	n = 65 (59%)	n = 60 (70%)
Online	n = 12 (11%)	n = 21 (24%)
Other (e.g., Full-time, Executive)	n = 3 (5%)	n = 1(1%)
Type of Organization Studied		
Profit	n = 59 (54%)	n = 69 (80%)
Non-profit	n = 51 (46%)	n = 17 (20%)
Career-enhancing Behaviors		
Job Interview	No, n = 59 (54%), Yes, n = 51(46%)	No, n = 47 (55%), Yes, n = 39 (45%)
Expand Professional Network	No, n = 49 (44%), Yes, n = 61 (56%)	No, n = 28 (33%), Yes, n = 58 (67%)
Career Change	No, n = 80 (73%), Yes, n = 30 (27%)	No, n = 64 (74%) ,Yes, n = 22 (26%)

scriptive statistics for the PUECCC scale were: initial sample, M = 7.17, SD = 2.42; validation sample, M = 7.55, SD = 2.55. The results support RQ1, i.e., cross-cultural management and ethics management competency items can be combined into a short, reliable PUECCC scale.

The second research posed a positive relationship between an MBA alumni career-enhancing behavioral measure and PUECCC beyond controlled for demographic and classroom background variables. Table 2 presents the results of the final hierarchical regression models for both samples. In order to run these regression analyses, two variables needed to be recoded, due to low sample sizes within variable categories (Stevens, 1996). Race was recoded into 1 = White, 2 = non-white (combining all other races), and MBA Program Type was recoded into 1 = Part-time, 2 = Other (Global, online, other). Total variance explained (R2) and overall F values with successive steps, as well as changes in variance explained by each step will be reported.

Three demographic variables were first entered for explaining PUECCC in the initial sample, Gender, Race and Years of Professional Experience. Collectively these variables explained a significant proportion of the variance, $R2 = .07$, $F(3, 106) = 2.70$, $p < .05$. One variable, Years of Professional Experience, was significant $b = .06$, $t(102) = 2.07$, $p < .05$, such that MBA alumni with greater professional experienced higher PUECCC.

In the second step, three classroom background variables were added, Modality, MBA Program Type, and Type of Organization Studied. Collectively these variables explained a an additional 5% of the variance in PUECCC but this was not significant, with overall $F(6, 103) = 2.23$, $p < .05$. No individual variable within this set was significant.

In the third step only one variable was entered, Career-enhancing Behaviors, and this variable was significant, $b = .54$, $t(102) = 2.26$, $p < .05$, and it accounted for 4% additional variance in PUECCC. MBA alumni performing more career-enhancing behaviors had higher PUECC The total variance accounted for was $R2 = .16$, with an overall $F(7, 102) = 2.37$, $p < .05$.

The same procedure was used for the validation sample, which was reduced to n = 82 (four respondents did not reveal their race). Three demographic variables were first entered for explaining PUECCC, Gender, Race and Years of Professional Experience. Collectively these vari-

Table 2

Final Hierarchical Regression Models for Incrementally Testing the Contributions of Demographic, Classroom Background, and Career -enhancing Behaviors for Explaining Perceived Utility of Ethical and Cross-Cultural Competencies on Initial and Validation Samples

	Initial Sample (n = 110)					Validation Sample (n = 82)				
Outcome	**Perceived Utility of Ethical and Cross-Cultural Competencies[h]**					**Perceived Utility of Ethical and Cross-Cultural Competencies[h]**				
	b	SE	R^2	Change R^2	F	*b*	SE	R^2	Change R^2	F
Step 1: Demographic Variables										
Gender[a]	.27	.48				1.18*	.55			
Race[b]	.48	.49				.57	.62			
Years of Professional Experience[c]	.06*	.03				.09*	.04			
			.07*		2.70*			.11*		3.44*
Step 2: Classroom Background Variables										
Modality[d]	-.94	.49				.48	.69			
MBA Program Type[e]	-.34	.47				-.10	.63			
Type of Organization Studied[f]	.36	.46				-1.17	.70			
			.12*	.05	2.23*			.15*	.04	2.27*
Step 3: Career										
Career-enhancing Behaviors[g]	.55*	.24				.54+	.30			
			.16*	.04*	2.37*			.19*	.04*	2.49*

Note. *b* is unstandardized regression weight, SE = standard error; + p < .10; *p < .05, **p < .01, all two-tailed,

[a] Gender, 1 = male, 2 = female; [b] Race, 1= White, 2 = Non-white; [c] Years of Professional Experience – number of years; [d] Modality, 1= online, 2 = in-person; [e] MBA Program Type, 1= Part-time, 2 = Other; [f] Type of Organization Studied, 1 = profit, 2 = non-profit; [g] Career-enhancing Behaviors – job interview + expand professional network + career change, each answered 0 = no, 1 = yes; [h] Perceived Utility of Ethical and Cross-Cultural Competencies, 0 (not useful in my career) to 10 (very useful in my career)

ables explained a significant proportion of the variance, R2 = .11, F(3, 78) = 3.44, p < .05. One variable, Years of Professional Experience, was significant b = .09, t(74) = 2.46, p < .05, such that MBA alums with greater professional experience perceived higher PUECCC. In addition, Gender had a significant impact, b = 1.18, t(74) = 2.17, p < .05, such that females perceived higher PUECCC.

In the second step, three classroom background variables were added, Modality, MBA Program Type, and

Type of Organization. Collectively these variables explained an additional 4% of the variance in PUECCC but this was not significant, with overall $F(6, 75) = 2.27$, $p < .05$. No individual variable within this set was significant.

In the third step, the Career-enhancing Behaviors variable was entered, and using a one-tailed test, it was significant, $b = .54$, $t(74) = 1.82$, $p < .05$ (two-tailed, $p < .10$, as shown in Table 2), accounting for 4% additional variance in PUECCC. Thus, MBA alumni performing more career-enhancing behaviors in the validation sample also had higher PUECCC. The total variance accounted for was $R2 = .19$, with an overall $F(7, 74) = 2.49$, $p < .05$. These results support RQ2, i.e., there will be a positive relationship between an MBA alumni career-enhancing behavioral measure and PUECCC beyond controlled for demographic and classroom background variables.

Discussion

To the authors' knowledge, this is the first empirical study measuring Perceived Utility of Ethical and Cross-Cultural Competencies (PUECCC) by combining ethical management and cross-cultural effectiveness items and finding a reliable scale across two different MBA alumni samples. Prior studies, while discussing the importance of MBA students developing ethics management and intercultural management competencies (Bedwell et al., 2014; Jackson, 2006; Nelson et al., 2012) and building activities into courses to strengthen such competencies (e.g., Carlson & Burke, 1998; Dean & Beggs, 2006) have not developed a specific scale to collectively measure the perceived utility of both competencies to MBA careers. Both competencies were emphasized as learning goals in the research context of an MBA capstone course, which utilized a client-focused, project-oriented team approach. Client-focused team project-based MBA capstones are a subset of problem-based learning courses and feature the added pressure of addressing a real business challenge for a client organization with a stake in the quality of the research and recommendations provided by the student teams (Cummings & Yur-Austin, 2022; Kloppenberg & Baucus, 2004; Nikolova & Andersen, 2017). Nikolova and Andersen (2017, p. 766) did ask for MBA alumni feedback about gaining "awareness of other perspectives and cultures," but not about ethical management.

From a course transfer perspective, it was gratifying to find the positive relationship of a career-enhancing behavioral measure to teaching-reinforced PUECCC, suggesting that such competency helped the MBA alumni in their careers. It is important to note that this positive relationship between career-enhancing behaviors and PUECCC was found using a nine-year (initial sample) and two-year (validation sample) time period, enhancing confidence in the validity of this relationship. The other significant consistent correlate of PUECCC was years of professional experience, indicating that as MBA alumni had more experience their PUECCC was higher. As MBA alumni naturally accumulated more professional experience, e.g., interacting with clients and employees from various backgrounds, it could be expected that they would exhibit higher sensitivity to both ethical and cross-cultural issues. However, beyond such work experience, career-enhancing behaviors still accounted for additional significant PEUCCC variance.

MBA Instructors as Role Models for Cross-cultural and Ethics Management Competencies

It is important to note that the MBA instructor serves as a role model to his/her students for displaying sensitivities to both cross-cultural and ethical issues through their treatment of their students. In recognizing their need to help students develop cross-cultural management competency skills, Szkudlarek, McNett, Romani and Lane (2013) emphasized how they used experiential exercises in the classroom. While carrying out experiential-based teaching, Dean, Wright and Forray (2020) discussed the ethical and moral responsibilities that management faculty need to consider. Stewart, Crary and Humberd (2008, p.382) noted that instructors not only need to teach cross-cultural/diversity skills but also have the responsibility to act as role models for embracing diversity with their students. Stewart et al. (2008, p.375) define diversity management competence based on Avery and Thomas (2004, p.382), i.e., diversity management competence includes the interpersonal skills necessary to effectively work with demographically diverse others.

While Hühn (2014) has argued that MBA programs have undermined ethics, including the syllabus and pedagogy used, other scholars, e.g., Carlson and Burke (1998) and Dean and Beggs (2006), have discussed the importance of ethical management competency development. Carlson and Burke (1998) presented a course, incorporating a fictitious case, for measuring the ethical development of their students, using pre and posttests to show changes in measured attitudes, e.g., self-interest, leadership. Dean and Beggs (2006)'s qualitative study interviewed 27 business professors teaching business ethics for the different teaching methods they used for teaching ethics, and they measured increasing levels of potential student impact, beginning with descriptive (e.g., sharing professional codes of conduct) up to consistent behavioral change (e.g., never cheating on an exam regardless of ease or surety of getting away with it, whistleblowing regardless of potential backlash). O'Brien (2010) argued for the importance of instructors' showing a caring attitude towards their students, with openness, kindness, and ethical treatment. Such above-cited research indicates that there are many types of course design that can facilitate MBA students developing PEUCCC. Building upon Nicolova and Andersen (2017), regardless of course design, this study suggests that the career usefulness of both competencies can be measured and combined into a scale for potential follow-up for MBA alumni feedback to MBA instructors and administrators.

Study Limitations and Future Research

PUECCC was measured by a 2-item retrospective perceived scale, filled out by MBA capstone alumni. The

context was a client-focused, project-based student team capstone course. The usefulness of such a scale in other MBA capstone courses without this course design focus remains to be tested. In addition, gathering alternative source evidence for either ethical management or cross-cultural effectiveness could have further validated this scale. Such alternative source evidence as specific behavioral examples of ethics or cross-cultural sensitivities during a client project, or within a team, documented in progressive team notes, or client-based observations, could be considered for future research. Only three career-enhancing behaviors, job interview, expanded professional network, and career change were measured using a binary response scale. Although there was consistency across both samples in behavior frequencies for exhibiting these behaviors, having an expanded response scale, e.g., how many times have you job interviewed, and incorporating additional career-enhancing behaviors, such as getting a raise, being promoted or starting one's own business should ideally be measured in future research (Cappellen & Janssens, 2008; Hwang, Bento & Arbaugh, 2011). These improvements could strengthen the relationship between PUECCC and career-enhancing behaviors. The linkage between PUECCC and other variables such as career satisfaction and occupational identity (Baruch & Lavi-Steiner, 2015) could be studied as well as recognizing that the lack of PUECCC may lead to a negative "career shock" impact on one's career (Mansur & Felix, 2021). Another general application of PUECCC might be for the career development of global mentors (Crocitto, Sullivan & Carraher, 2005).

One study strength was the research design of controlling for demographic and classroom background variables (Spector, 2021) and then finding a career-enhancing behavioral measure to be consistently positively related to PUECCC beyond these controls. However, since both studies were retrospective, a cause-effect relationship between career-enhancing behaviors and sensitivity competency cannot be determined. The initial sample had a much longer time frame between taking the capstone course and filling out the survey than the validation sample so retrospective bias would be of greater concern. Such concern about the effects of time for the initial sample may be partially alleviated by finding that independent samples t-test results showed no mean variable differences between those who had taken the course 5 to 9 years before responding versus those who had taken the course only 1 to 4 years before responding. However, it would have been useful to refresh these "older" course alumni (5 – 9 years) about the capstone course, e.g., learning objectives, before they filled out the survey items. This would have enhanced the validity of the data collection for this group. In addition, although as noted in the Methods section, the basic nature and structure of the capstone course remained the same over the study period, no formal checks were made between alumni who had taken the course a longer time ago versus more recently.

Due to sample size limitations, several variables, i.e., race, MBA program type, needed to have their more nuanced categories combined for analyses. Adopting a more aggressive sampling strategy for the initial sample like for the validation sample, i.e., having non-work emails and a gift card drawing, would have improved the poor response rate. Although there were several initial versus validation sample differences, e.g., class modality, and type of client organization serviced; larger sample sizes, with more sample heterogeneity, could have allowed for more PUECCC variance to be explained, as both samples were primarily white and part-time MBA alumni from the same program.

Conclusion

Ethical management and cross-cultural management fall under the more general managerial competency of "human capital" (Rubin & Dierdorff, 2009), which has been identified as desired by employers but typically less emphasized in MBA programs. Across two MBA alumni samples, a short, two-item scale was developed for combining each competency under the label of Perceived Utility of Ethical and Cross-Cultural Competencies (PUECCC). This scale is meant to be incorporated into MBA curricula and future competency-related assessments of perceived career usefulness to MBA alumni (Rubin & Dierdorff, 2013). Such curriculum sensitivity can potentially help to reverse declining MBA enrollments, particularly for MBA programs not in the top tier (Andriole, 2023; Baruch & Lavi-Steiner, 2015). The PEUCCC can also be used to assess manager competencies Stumpf (2009). A consistent positive relationship between a career-enhancing behavioral measure and PUECCC was also found. Future research is needed to further explore this relationship.

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