

Zoller - Research Statement

My approach to research is through a multi-disciplinary style of combining management practices with psychological antecedents and practical career-related implications. At the focus of the academic work are cross-cultural effects on cognition in career context. The main line of enquiry in the research I conduct evaluates the cognitive steps taken by participants responding to rating scales. In addition, organizational behavior topics such as leadership and mentoring relationships in a career context and how workforce generations respond to work-life balance issues are the core of my academic work.

The topic of the doctoral project I completed is *Cross-cultural effects on the cognitive process of verbal and numeric rating scales*. This project studied cognitive processes used by subjects to respond to scales. Specifically, a mix-method approach including surveying 92 software employees from four cultural groups (Americans, Israelis, Latinos, and Romanians) and interviewing 36 of them was used. I then examined effects of culture, leadership level, and demographic variables on the thought process used by respondents when answering verbal (five-option) and numeric (1 to 10) rating scales. Although it is known that cross-cultural factors affect cognition and the ways in which subjects respond to comparative scaling tasks, the cognitive processes used by respondents to respond to such scales, as well as whether they are affected by culture, leadership level, or demographic variables was not fully understood. I discovered that cultural values measured through leadership level and demographics, rather than cultural practices, affect the cognitive processes respondents use to answer surveys. Demonstrating the link between leadership level and the cognitive process is an innovative finding which argues that non-managers are less likely to use extreme values in their survey responses than managers and directors.

This research contributes to the growing field of Cognitive Aspects of Survey Methodology movement (CASM). Focusing on cultural values rather than cultural practices is a key need of management researchers, multinational organizations, and business leaders. Furthermore, the approach of identifying and handling cross-cultural differences described in this line of research can be used to train leaders in cross-cultural environments. Part of this research was recently presented in March at the 2019 Annual meeting of the Academy of International Business (AIB), US Midwest conference in Chicago, in which also I received a distinguished Research Award. The second plan publication will include key findings for cultural differences in responding to scales with regards to leadership and is to be submitted to a journal in 2021.

A second line of research of interest is the study of history of management. Together with Dr. Muldoon from Emporia State University (KS), I have several publications in the Journal of Management History (JMH) and a book chapter evaluating the Hawthorne Studies from multiple perspectives. One paper titled *Illuminating the principles of social exchange theory with Hawthorne studies* suggests that Homans' social exchange theory (SET), a management theory, as an explanation for some of the findings of some of the famous Hawthorne experiments (1924-1933). The paper demonstrates how social situations play an important role in task performance and productivity and how social exchanges can facilitate it. The paper won the 2020 Emerald's Literati Award as one of the highly commended papers published in the Journal of Management History in 2019. Additional collaborations with Dr. Muldoon include a book chapter about Hawthorne Studies written for Handbook of Business and Social Sciences (published by Edward Elgar Publishing in 2020). Two more papers on the concept of span of control and the Eastland disaster of 1915 were published in 2020 (and 2021) by the Journal of Management History. One

more publication is expected in 2021 based on a paper presented in the Academy of Management in August 2019 in Boston. This is titled *Mayo's beacon: How the Hawthorne studies, logical positivism, and behavioral psychology helped create social exchange*. The last won the John F. Mee Award for Best paper for the Management History (MH) division in the Academy of Management's Annual meeting in Boston MA.

A third line of research I am involved with generational studies with young adults and children in the field of psychology. Two of my book reviews were published with the *American Journal of Psychology*. The first was titled *GenMe'ers are coming: Book review of Generation Me: Why today's young Americans are more confident, assertive, entitled - and more miserable than ever before*. The second is *the costs of overprotecting the young - iGen: Why today's super-connected kids are growing up less rebellious, more tolerant, less happy --and completely unprepared for adulthood--and what that means for the rest of us*. Another publication in Psychology (*Journal of Aging, Neuropsychology, and Cognition*) was completed in 2009 during my master's studies, together with my multiple researchers from Florida Atlantic University and Miami Dade College. That publication is *Level of education and category fluency task among Spanish speaking elders: Number of words, clustering, and switching strategies*.

A fourth project investigates mentoring relationships in career development. In this collaborative research with colleagues from Nova Southeastern University (NSU) and Florida Atlantic University (FAU), we evaluate the effects of disagreements between mentors and protégés in mentorship relationships and argue that disagreements serve an important role in functional mentoring relationships. Preliminary findings were presented at the Academy of Management (AOM) in 2016 in Anaheim (CA) and were recognized as a finalist for Michael Driver Best Applied Paper Award in the Career (CAR) Division.

A future cross-cultural project I plan to start in 2021 investigates how leadership level affects the cognitive processes people use to solve complex tasks involving attention, perception, coordination, and reasoning. In this study, I will use cognitive assessment battery and follow-up interviews to investigate in what ways does leadership level affect cognitive processes when completing cognitive assessments. My hypothesis is that managers and directors who have more work-related responsibility and need to make tough decisions daily may develop different mechanisms to deal with expectations and authority compared to non-managers and, thus, use different cognitive mechanisms of response.

In summary, my research investigates how leaders and non-leaders respond to scales and how cross-cultural differences affect the cognitive processes they used by doing so. This research is applicable for career context of mentoring relationships and work-life balance. Identifying culture to account for survey response style tells a partial story. My goal is to uncover what cultural aspects contribute to cross-cultural differences and how improving survey tools and their analysis can improve careers, leadership, and management practices.

Sincerely,



Yaron J. Zoller