

THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT & MARKETING
DEPARTMENTAL RESEARCH SEMINAR

**Taking the Bite Out of Culture: The Impact of
Task Structure and Task Type on Overcoming
Impediments to Cross-Cultural Team Performance
(JOB, in press)**

By

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Date: Tuesday, 9 July 2013

Time: 2:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Venue: M802

All interested are welcome

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Abstract

The research literature on the effect of team diversity makes no conclusive inference about the effect of cultural diversity on team performance. We propose to resolve the competing predictions of the information/decision making versus the social categorization theories by combining two task-related theories, the situational strength theory and McGrath's Circumplex model of group tasks (1984). We propose that high task specificity, which facilitates similar interpretations and shared understanding among team members, is beneficial for "execute" (convergent) tasks, which require team cooperation and high interdependence to reach team effectiveness. Low task specificity, in contrast, is beneficial for "generate" (creative) tasks, because it does not place constraints on generating original ideas and does not require tight coordination among the team members. We tested for the effects of situational strength and task type on the relationship between cultural diversity and team performance in two experiments. In both experiments dyads that were either heterogeneous (Israeli-Singaporean) or homogenous (Israeli-Israeli, Singaporean-Singaporean) worked under low or high task specificity. In Study 1, dyads performed convergent execution tasks and in Study 2 they performed creative idea generation tasks. The impediment of multiculturalism was reduced in "execute" (convergent) tasks under high task specificity, and in "generate" (divergent) tasks under low task specificity.

Professor Miriam Erez is the Vice Dean of the MBA programs, Faculty of Industrial Engineering & Management, Technion. She is also the founding chair of the Knowledge Center for Innovation, and the coordinator of the status of women at the Technion.

Miriam is the recipient of the Israel Prize in Management Sciences, 2005. In 2002 she received the Award of the International Association of Applied Psychology (IAAP) "for the Distinguished Scientific Contributions to the International Advancement of Applied Psychology". Miriam appears among the most cited authors in the field of management, 1983-2004 (Podsakoff et al. J. of Management, 2008, Table 9).

Her research is in three major areas: a) Cross-cultural Research b) Work Motivation, and c) Innovation in Organizations. She is AOM Fellow, SIOP Fellow and IAAP Fellow.