

# Differences Matter: Cultural Tiles and Mosaic in Virtual Teams

Souren Paul from Nova Southeastern University

Date/Time: 3/27/2019 at 1:00

Location: Leir Conference Room, CAB 3052

**Abstract:** Culture is the lens through which we interpret the world around us, so differences in culture increase the complexity of global virtual teams. Individuals' culture can be viewed as a mosaic which consists of tiles from three distinct categories: the culture of their social demographic, the culture of their organization, and the culture of their nation or geographic region. We conducted two studies to examine the effects of cultural tiles and cultural mosaic on perceptions and behaviors in virtual teams. In a vignette based survey study, we find that individual members' perceptions of group atmosphere, social process of interaction, and shared understanding were influenced by his/her national and social demographic cultures but not by the organizational culture. We used a laboratory experiment to study conflict in global virtual teams whose members were drawn from different social demographics, different organizations, and different nations. A team members' perception of task conflict was better explained by the integrated effects of all elements of culture, rather than by considering each element separately. For some participants, the context in which they were interacting changed their perceptions. This suggests that a better conception of cultural effects is the merged-integrated model which theorizes that culture is a merger of cultural elements but individual elements remain so they can be drawn upon as needed. Our results also suggest that team members drawn from different organizations may ascribe some aspects of task conflict to differing organizational cultures rather than being true task conflict. Thus it is a heterogeneity of organizational cultures, not the nature of the organizational cultures that led to differences.

**Speaker Bio:** Souren Paul is currently an Associate Professor of Information Systems at the College of Engineering and Computing at Nova Southeastern University. His research interests are in areas of virtual teams, collaboration systems, behavioral information security, and augmented intelligence. He has published research articles in *Journal of Management Information Systems*, *Decision Support Systems*, and *Information & Management*. He served as Conference Co-Chair for Americas Conference on Information Systems (AMCIS) 2015 which was held in Puerto Rico. He will co-chair the International Conference on Information Systems (ICIS) 2020. He is the Adviser for External Development for the Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences (HICSS).

This talk is part of the MTSM Business Data Science PhD Program Seminar Series