

# Group intercultural competence: proposing a concept

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## Abstract

The concept of intercultural competence (IC) was introduced by researchers to understand why and how some people, groups and organizations thrive in intercultural situations (LEUNG, ANG and TAN, 2014, 2014). The literature on individual IC is wide and guided by many concepts, but the predominant focus of these concepts are cognitive and behavioral, with a shortage of group level studies. In addition, there is an emerging paradigm shifting the emphasis of IC, including the ability to work successfully in a diverse team and the development of subsequent relationships, featuring a relational approach. A need was identified to deepen individual IC literature and investigate how it would be possible to work the concept at the group level. With the aim of proposing a concept for group intercultural competence (GIC), it was necessary to build a categorization of the field, a classification of concepts and an analysis of elements and IC dimensions, based on the literature on competence in general. With this it was possible to formulate a concept for the GIC that brings up a perspective of social construction of reality (BERGER and LUCKMAN, 2003), where the group intercultural competence can be better understood from an integrative perspective that encompasses social interactions. The dimensions that remained in the concept of GIC were: interaction, efficacy, cultural differences, communication, learning and negotiated culture.

**Keywords:** Intercultural management. Multicultural Teams. Intercultural competence. Group intercultural competence. Cross-cultural competence.

## Competência intercultural grupal: uma proposição de conceito

### Resumo

O conceito de competência intercultural (CI) foi introduzido pelos pesquisadores para entender porque e como algumas pessoas, alguns grupos e algumas organizações prosperam em situações interculturais (LEUNG, ANG e TAN, 2014). A literatura sobre CI é ampla e permeada de muitos conceitos, porém, o foco predominante desses conceitos é cognitivo e comportamental, há escassez de estudos em nível grupal. Somado a essa constatação, existe um paradigma emergente mudando a ênfase da CI, inclusive a capacidade de trabalhar com sucesso em uma equipe diversificada e o desenvolvimento de relacionamento subsequente, caracterizando uma abordagem relacional. Com o objetivo de propor um conceito para a competência intercultural grupal (CIG), inexistente na literatura sobre o tema, surgiu a necessidade de um aprofundamento na literatura de CI individual e de uma investigação de como seria possível trabalhar o conceito em nível grupal. Para isso, mostrou-se necessária uma categorização do campo, classificação de conceitos e análise de elementos e dimensões da CI, com base na literatura de competência de forma geral. Isso possibilitou a elaboração de um conceito para a CIG, abrindo uma perspectiva de construção social da realidade (BERGER e LUCKMANN, 2003), onde a CI grupal pode ser mais bem compreendida a partir de uma perspectiva integradora que abarque as interações sociais. As dimensões que permaneceram no conceito de CI grupal foram: interação, eficácia, diferenças culturais, comunicação, aprendizagem e cultura negociada.

**Palavras-chave:** Administração intercultural. Equipes multiculturais. Competência intercultural. Competência intercultural grupal. Competência *cross-cultural*.

## Competencia intercultural grupal: una proposición de concepto

### Resumen

El concepto de competencia intercultural (CI) fue introducido por los investigadores para entender por qué y cómo algunas personas, algunos grupos y algunas organizaciones prosperan en situaciones interculturales (LEUNG, ANG y TAN, 2014). La literatura sobre CI es amplia e impregnada de diversos conceptos, no obstante, el foco predominante de esos conceptos es cognitivo y comportamental, hay escasez de estudios en nivel grupal. Sumado a esa constatación, existe un paradigma emergente que cambia el énfasis de la CI, inclusive la capacidad de trabajar con éxito en un equipo diversificado y el desarrollo de relaciones subsecuentes, lo que caracteriza un abordaje relacional. Con el objetivo de proponer un concepto para la competencia intercultural grupal (CIG), inexistente en la literatura sobre el tema, surgió la necesidad de una profundización en la literatura de CI individual y de una investigación de cómo sería posible trabajar el concepto en nivel grupal. Para ello, se hizo necesaria una categorización del campo, clasificación de conceptos y análisis de elementos y dimensiones de la CI, con base en la literatura sobre competencia de forma general. Eso permitió la elaboración de un concepto para la CIG, abriendo una perspectiva de construcción social de la realidad (BERGER y LUCKMANN, 2003), donde la CI grupal puede ser mejor comprendida desde una perspectiva integradora que abarque las interacciones sociales. Las dimensiones que permanecieron en el concepto de CI grupal fueron: interacción, eficacia, diferencias culturales, comunicación, aprendizaje y cultura negociada.

**Palabras clave:** Administración intercultural. Equipos multiculturales. Competencia intercultural. Competencia intercultural grupal. Competencia *cross-cultural*.

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## INTRODUCTION

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Multinational companies (MNC) increasingly rely on highly diversified work teams, intermingling workers of different nationality, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and skills (or lack thereof). Therefore, cultural diversity and intercultural experience are issues that have escalated in the debates of organizational studies (RODRIGUES and PINHEIRO, 2010) in the context of multinational companies.

Currently, an increasing number of multicultural teams (MCT) work in companies with international activity. The issue of teamwork itself is not new to research, but with an increase in multiculturalism “there are additional factors, changes, and challenges involved in the dynamics of teamwork” (ZIMMERMANN, 2010, p. 9). Cultural encounters are part of the daily work routine of employees, managers and companies, who globally exchange not only products but also work and knowledge (GERTSEN and SODERBERG, 2010).

The increasing mobility of individuals and companies has led to a heterogeneous workspace, which requires the development of new skills and abilities that enable multicultural coexistence (FREITAS, 2008). Such skills and abilities would result in increased capacity to deal with diverse situations, knowledge broadening and the betterment of communicative and negotiation skills, as well as the ability to coordinate MCT (BUENO and FREITAS, 2015).

To understand why and how some people, groups and organizations behave in intercultural situations, researchers introduced the concept of Intercultural Competence (IC) (LEUNG, ANG and TAN, 2014). Coexistence can help develop IC, as it tends to be useful for professional growth and organizational efficiency, according to Chevrier (2000).

Research on IC has been marked by variations around its definition, as well as what constitutes it (IBRD, 2010), which indicates generalized disparity when it comes to outlining its identity, specifically, what IC consists of (DEARDORFF, 2004; SPITZBERG and CHANGNON, 2009; LEUNG, ANG and TAN, 2014). Having said that, a wide range of studies and definitions on IC have focused on the cognitive and behavioral dimension and, predominantly, at the individual level (HAMMER, 2015).

According to Leung, Ang and Tan (2014), few studies have examined the underlying processes of IC at the group level, or the way IC translates into intercultural efficacy and under which conditions such development occurs. Moreover, Collier (2015) argues that the IC studies should be backed up by analyses of the macro and meso levels, and considering contextual factors. The problem emerges at the analysis level: how can one think of intercultural competence beyond the individual dimension? When is a group or organization considered to be interculturally competent? These issues demonstrate a gap in IC studies at the group and organizational level.

Thus, it is possible to see IC through the lenses of individual, group and organizational level, depending on how the issue has been problematized and on the level of analysis. From the perspective of social construction of reality (BERGER and LUCKMANN, 2003), group or organizational IC can be better understood from an integrative standpoint that encompasses social interactions.

Hence, it is necessary to discuss how IC, whose conceptual base is predominantly individual, can be thought of collectively, whether it be as a group or organization. Therefore, an appropriate new concept must be introduced, one with an amplitude that differs from that which has been proposed by the authors of the field.

## INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMPETENCE

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The concept of competence in management literature is broad and involves different research interests. Thus, the trajectory of competence research under the interculturality scope is different from the trajectory of research on individual and organizational competences. Studies on individual competences date back to the 1970s when David McClelland chose to focus on skills rather than on intelligence, and was then followed by authors such as Richard E. Boyatzis, Lyle M. Spencer and Signe M. Spencer, Patricia A. McLagan, Richard J. Mirabile and Guy Le Boterf (FERNANDES, 2004). Subsequently, this concept was disseminated in Brazil in the 1980s and early 1990s, tied to the idea of good performance in work positions (DUTRA, 2006).

Under the organizational dimension, the idea of competence has been significantly influenced by the work of Prahalad and Hamel (1990), developed upon Penrose's (1959) resources approach, and the concepts of essential competence and organizational competence. Since then, there have been several studies – with different perspectives – that culminated in the current awareness of dynamic capacities as competence renewal.

Therefore, the theoretical reference for competences has an individual and an organizational side to it, and the concepts of collective and organizational competences can also be contemplated in groups, dimension through which the construction of competences via social interaction occurs.

Thus, in spite of the different trajectories undertaken by studies on competence, a common element can be observed among the different levels of analysis – the social interaction – which should be addressed based on cultural factors, an argument that is consistent with IC studies (ZIMMERMANN, 2010).

## ORIGIN AND EVOLUTION OF INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE STUDIES

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According to Spitzberg and Changnon (2009), the development of IC studies began after the Second World War, when the United States of America were looking to become more involved with foreign companies, creating strong diplomatic and business alliances in order to minimize the Cold War effects. Added to this scenario was an attempt to remedy international stability by expanding humanitarian aid programs to countries with dangerous political instability. The need to select and train people to serve effectively in programs such as Peace Corps stimulated scientific interest around issues that involved cultural encounters and their impact on the success of group missions.

Seminal studies dating back from the late 1950s and 1960s focused on the characteristics and competencies of young Peace Corps workers and the impact of such characteristics on their performance. In the mid-1970s, scholars and professionals joined forces to consolidate and expand the list of expected characteristics for success in the Peace Corps. In the 1980s, researchers' efforts focused on developing and validating models to assess IC, but little progress was made in relation to the dimensions of IC and how to measure it (SPITZBERG and CHANGNON, 2009).

Between the 1990s and 2000, measurement efforts were developed based on more elaborate conceptual models, and most of these studies were focused on the evaluation of knowledge and skills, disregarding affective and motivational components. In the meantime, social psychology conducted studies focused on intercultural interactions (SPITZBERG and CHANGNON, 2009).

In recent years the work involving IC has been enriched by the development perspective, especially so with individuals and within teams and organizations. Furthermore, there is an emerging paradigm shifting the emphasis of IC, including the ability to work successfully in a diversified team and the development of subsequent relationships (DEARDORFF, 2015).

## DIVERSITY OF STUDIES ON INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

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The diversity of studies involving IC gave rise to two epistemological currents identified by Rodrigues and Pinheiro (2010). These authors clarify the primordial difference between the currents: (a) the cross-cultural current, which criticizes Multinational Corporation – MNC by replicating management practices in foreign contexts; and (b) the intercultural current, which has a "strong interpretive and interactionist accent" (RODRIGUES and PINHEIRO, 2010, p. 8). This article falls under the intercultural perspective, since this current focuses on the development of IC as a process that builds on the social interaction between groups and individuals.

It should also be noted that even under the current that adopts the term "intercultural competence", the terminology used in IC studies shows literature variations. For example, an initial review shows the use of many different words and phrases as a synonym for IC, including the terms "cross-cultural adaptation", "intercultural sensitivity", "multicultural competence", "cross-cultural competence", "global competence", "cross-cultural efficacy", "international competence", "cultural competence" and "cross-cultural adjustment" (DEARDORFF, 2004).

In this article, the term "intercultural competence" was adopted based on the assumption that in multicultural work teams, professionals from different backgrounds are in constant interaction, building interculturality among their own cultures. In order to do so, they must develop capacities, ways of thinking and acting to deal with the unknown and with the differences.

Due to the diversity of terms used to refer to IC, research on the topic has been marked by variations in the definition of what constitutes it (BIRD, 2010; DEARDORFF, 2004; SPITZBERG and CHANGNON, 2009; LEUNG, ANG and TAN, 2014; DEARDORFF, 2015; ARASARATNAM, 2015).

In order to expand on the existing definitions in the IC literature, they were identified as presented in the field (Box 1). For each definition, the level and explicit or implicit focus were analyzed.

### Box 1

#### Definitions of intercultural competence based on literature

Definition	Focus / level
Ability to function effectively in another culture (GERTSEN, 1990; DINGES and BALDWIN, 1996).	Behavioral / individual
The knowledge of other people; self-knowledge; skills to interpret and relate; appreciation of the values, beliefs and behavior of others; and self-relativization (BYRAM, 1997).	Cognitive behavioral / individual
General ability to transcend ethnocentrism, appreciate other cultures, and generate adequate general behavior in one or more different cultures (BENNETT, 1986).	Cognitive behavioral / individual
Ability to adapt to other cultures based on elements involved in the linguistic processes of interaction between the partners (FANTINI, 2000).	Cognitive behavioral / individual
Manager's ability to recognize and understand the existence of each culture's own beliefs and values, as well as to establish productive dialogues with the local population, and also to solve conflicts resulting from possible intercultural shocks (LANE, DISTEFANO and MAZNEVSKI, 2000).	Cognitive behavioral / individual
Ability to effectively interact both with people from other cultures as those of their own culture. It involves awareness of different values and behaviors as well as the ability to deal with them through non-judgment (BYRAM and NICHOLS, 2001).	Cognitive behavioral / individual
Set of knowledge and skills needed to interact successfully with people from other ethnic, religious, cultural, national and geographic groups. An individual who has a high degree of intercultural competence is able to have successful interactions with people from different groups (HAMMER, BENNETT and WISEMAN, 2003).	Cognitive behavioral / individual
This is a meta-competence that allows players to look at the structures, objects and interactions from an affective distance, providing reflection and understanding of intercultural experience after interaction situations and allowing them to make situational adjustments of their actions and find alternatives that are negotiated between actors (EARLEY and ANG, 2003).	Cognitive behavioral / individual collective
Ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes. Ability to change the references appropriately and adapt the behavior to the cultural context. Ability to achieve goals through constructive interaction in an intercultural context (DEARDORFF, 2004).	Cognitive, behavioral and cultural / individual
High level competence, which refers to specialist's ability to work in multicultural environments, promoting intercultural learning. Ability to use personal experience to facilitate collaboration within multicultural work environments. This competence includes personal characteristics such as: commitment, self-awareness, adaptation and flexibility; basic skills such as: methodological ability, organizational talent and social media skills, and ability to manage complex situations (LASONEN, 2005).	Cognitive behavioral / individual collective

Continue

Definition	Focus / level
Skills that basically involve: recognizing and optimizing cultural differences as resources for learning and for creating effective actions in specific contexts; thinking and acting on the basis of the premises of adaptation and empathy with the other, as well as the awareness that we share a cultural complex at all times; engaging the other (work teams, partners, communities, governments, among other stakeholders) to explore tacit demands that permeate organization and society behavior and needs (FRIEDMAN and ANTAL, 2005).	Cognitive, behavioral, cultural / individual and collective engagement
Capabilities that are necessary to achieve mutual understanding as well as for functional interaction and cooperation between people who have different cultural backgrounds (JOKIKOKKO, 2005).	Behavioral / individual
Effectiveness of an individual in developing a set of knowledge, skills and personal attributes in order to work successfully with people from different cultural backgrounds in country or abroad (JOHNSON and LENARTOWICZ, 2006).	Cognitive behavioral / individual
Generic cultural skill that is required in the interactions between individuals of different human groups who experience strangeness as a consequence of their mutual ignorance of the differences between them with a view to producing culture, creating familiarity and thus cohesion among the individuals involved, allowing them to pursue their interaction goals (RATHJE, 2007).	Cognitive behavioral cultural / individual and generic cultural
Management of the idea that allows members of different cultural systems to be aware of their cultural identity and cultural differences and to interact effectively and appropriately with others in different contexts by agreeing on the meaning of various symbol systems with the result of mutually related satisfaction (KUPKA, 2008).	Behavioral / individual
To be competent is not only to be functionally adequate in the performance of one or several tasks but to have a capital of cognitive and attitudinal resources that allows the manager to act with sensitivity and to provide innovative and creative answers to challenges in different cultural contexts. In short, being competent means being able to learn significantly (FISCHER, GONDIM, PEREIRA et al., 2009).	Cognitive behavioral / individual
Intercultural competence involves the critical cultural awareness of the Self and the Other in an intercultural encounter, with attention to relationship building, monitoring and management of emotions, empathy and face work (HOLMES and O'NEILL, 2012).	Cognitive behavioral / individual
Understanding the difference and the need to communicate effectively and engage with stakeholders effectively (FITCH, 2012).	Cognitive / individual
A CI diz respeito à compreensão cognitiva de um sistema cultural e, também, aos elementos analíticos e estratégicos que ampliam a interpretação e o âmbito da ação de uma pessoa, a fim de interagir adequadamente com pessoas de outras culturas. A competência intercultural dos atores-chave influencia e promove a negociação intercultural e processos de aprendizagem de modo positivo  IC refers to the cognitive understanding of a cultural system, and also to analytical and strategic elements that broaden the person's interpretation and scope of action in order to interact appropriately with people from other cultures. The intercultural competence of the actors influence and promote intercultural negotiation and learning processes in a positive way (BARMEYER and DAVOINE, 2015).	cognitive behavioral / individual and collective
To be interculturally competent it is essential to strive to understand the world from other people's perspectives, to seek to understand how cultures connect and become a starting point for future positive change (MCCARTHY, WHITE and DAVOINE, 2015).	Cognitive behavioral / individual

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

As can be verified, the predominant focus of IC definitions is cognitive and behavioral and the predominant level is individual. Most authors refer to cultural dimension as the context of competence use by the individual or manager. Two definitions embrace culture a little more broadly. One of them, by Friedman and Antal (2005), indicates that this competence relates to a set of skills involving thinking and acting based on the awareness that we share a cultural complex at all times and spaces and involves collective engagement in organization and society. The other, by Rathje (2007), indicates that IC is the generic cultural ability required in interactions between individuals of different human groups, aiming at the production of culture and cohesion among the individuals involved. In both of these definitions it is possible to realize that culture is cited as a context for the use of competence, but also as an element of development itself, however incipient it may be. In the first case, it involves collective engagement; and in the second, it is a cultural ability that occurs within interactions and aims at the production (or perpetuation) of culture.

So the problem emerges at the level of analysis: how can one think intercultural competence beyond the individual dimension? When is a group or an organization intercultural? These issues place a gap in IC studies at the group and organizational level.

Thus, it is argued here that, in the case of group and organizational IC, it is necessary to include the cultural dimension in addition to the cognitive and behavioral one, since group IC is developed through the interaction among its members, and organizational IC is developed through the interaction among members of the organization, as defended by authors who adopt the cultural or integrated perspective of organizational competence (TAKAHASHI, 2007). As pointed out by Fischer, Gondim, Pereira et al. (2009, p. 15): “the conceptual basis for the development of competence in intercultural management are implicit principles of integration, complementarity, continuity and recursion.” And it is at this point that the collective awareness of IC can benefit from advances in the study of group and organizational competencies, from an integrative perspective.

## ELEMENTS OF GROUP INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

In the field of international business, IC at the individual level - as a personal attribute, a knowledge and a skill - is associated with international career success. At the organizational and group level, IC is associated with team and business success through effective operations management across an increasingly diverse range of host sites (MORLEY and CERDIN, 2010).

Along those lines, it is possible to think of IC at the individual, group and organizational level, depending on how the issues are problematized and the level of analysis involved. From a social construction perspective of reality (BERGER and LUCKMANN, 2003), group or organizational IC can be better understood from an integrative perspective that encompasses social interactions. Thus, it is necessary to discuss how IC, whose conceptual base is predominantly individual, can be thought of collectively, either in group or in organization. Therefore, it is necessary to develop an appropriate concept whose amplitude is different from the one proposed by the authors of the field.

Although Friedman and Antal (2005) and Rathje (2007) have moved further by bringing collective engagement and generic cultural skills required in interactions among individuals to the picture, thus establishing group relevance, it is not yet the proposition of a specific concept, one that will make way for empirical investigation.

In order to capture literature contributions that allowed for a shift towards the concept of group IC, the constituent elements of the existing definitions at the individual level were identified and migrated to the collective logic, such as communication, which can be thought organizationally. Therefore, all definitions that present the group as relevant, even if not explicitly so, were selected and are presented in Box 2, along with the authors who represent it. Based on these references, the authors of this study designed a synthesis of the referred ‘ definitions, with the terms that represent the selected elements and that are explicitly mentioned by the authors highlighted in bold. In the last column, the dimensions for each mentioned element are described, as found in the literature. Therefore, these dimensions represent what the authors of the GIC field understand by each of these elements.

This box was based on the analyses of publications from the last 10 years, collected in 2014, from national and international journals. For national journals and annals of the *Encontros da Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa em Administração (EnANPAD)*, the criterion for selection was a B2 or above classification by *Qualis* from *Capes (Organizações & Sociedade, Revista de Administração de Empresas, Revista de Administração Contemporânea, Revista de Administração Pública, Revista de Administração da USP, Revista de Administração Mackenzie)*. As for the international journals, the



classification criterion underwent two stages. First, the most cited journals in *The Sage handbook of intercultural competence* (DEARDORFF, 2004) were listed; those were then shortlisted based on whether or not they classified as B2 or above in *Qualis* from *Capes* under the theme (*International Journal of Cross Cultural Management, International Journal of Intercultural Relations, Procedia: Social and Behavioral Sciences, European Management Journal, Journal of Managerial Psychology e Strategic Management Journal*).

In order to locate the articles, the specific search terms “intercultural competence” or “competência intercultural” (the Portuguese equivalent) were defined under title, keywords and abstract. The search resulted in 29 published articles, 27 international journals and 2 Brazilian journals or events, which in itself shows a lack of studies on IC in Brazil. It was possible to observe that there is a consensus among most authors concerning the relevant elements: interaction, effectiveness, cultural differences, communication, learning and negotiated culture.

## Box 2

### Elements, definitions, dimensions and authors of group intercultural competence

Elements by author	Definition overview	Dimensions for group intercultural competence
<b>Interaction</b> Deardorff (2004); Jokikokko (2005).	It is able to achieve its goals through constructive <b>interaction</b> in a multicultural context.	Interaction management (KOESTER and OLEBE, 2003); Team Consolidation and Engagement (MENDENHALL and OSLAND, 2002; FRIEDMAN and ANTAL, 2005; BIRD, 2010); Cohesion among team members (RATHJE, 2007); Results orientation (MENDENHALL and OSLAND, 2002; BIRD, 2010); Strong, clear and detailed planning (MENDENHALL and OSLAND, 2002; MORAN, YOUNGDAHL and MORAN, 2009; BIRD, 2010); Understanding the organization's strategic objectives (MORAN, YOUNGDAHL and MORAN, 2009); Understanding team goals (MORAN, YOUNGDAHL and MORAN, 2009); Clear description of roles (MORAN, YOUNGDAHL and MORAN, 2009).
<b>Effectiveness</b> Dinges e Baldwin (1996); Gertsen (1990); Bennett (1986).	It is able to <b>function effectively</b> with members of diverse cultures, generating adequate general behavior in one or more cultures.	Promoting intercultural learning (DEARDORFF, 2004; LASONEN, 2005); Ethno relative view- accepted the existence and importance of cultural differences in the group (DEARDORFF, 2004); Relationship building (MENDENHALL and OSLAND, 2002; BIRD 2010); Diversity management (PANGGABEAN, MURNIATI and TJITRA, 2013); Appreciation of the values, beliefs and behavior of group members (MORAN, YOUNGDAHL and MORAN, 2009; BYRAM, 1997); Personal attributes valuation (FITCH, 2012); Non-judgmental posture (BYRAM and NICHOLS, 2001); Negotiated culture (KIM, 1988; BARMEYER and DAVOINE, 2015); Successful interactions (HAMMER, BENNETT and WISEMAN, 2003; KUPKA, 2008); Ability to manage complex situations (LASONEN, 2005); Management of uncertainties (BIRD 2010).

Continuação

Elements by author	Definition overview	Dimensions for group intercultural competence
<b>Cultural differences</b> Friedman e Antal (2005).	It is able to recognize and optimize <b>cultural differences as a resource</b> for learning and for creating effective actions in specific contexts.	Global Mentality (BÜCKER and POUTSMA, 2010); Management of intellectual and cultural resources (MORAN, YOUNGDAHL and MORAN, 2009); Team members engagement (FRIEDMAN and ANTAL, 2005).
<b>Communication</b> Byram (1997); Fantini (2000); Deardorff (2004); Moran, Youngdahl e Moran (2009); Fitch (2012).	It is able to promote <b>effective communication</b> , that is, open, clear and frank communication.	Clear and open communication (MORAN, YOUNGDAHL and MORAN, 2009); <i>Constant Feedback</i> (MORAN, YOUNGDAHL and MORAN, 2009); Sociolinguistic ability (DEARDORFF, 2004); Accuracy in sending and receiving messages (DEARDORFF, 2004); Intercultural communication skills (BYRAM, 1997; MENDENHALL and OSLAND, 2002; BIRD, 2010; LOUGH, 2011; FITCH, 2012); Verbal and non-verbal skills (FANTINI, 2000; BUENO, 2010).
<b>Learning</b> Fischer, Gondim, Pereira et al. (2009).	It is able to <b>learn meaningfully</b> , generating innovative and creative responses to the challenges of different cultural contexts.	Continuous intercultural learning (MENDENHALL and OSLAND, 2002; BIRD, 2010); Openness to intercultural learning (DEARDORFF, 2004); Guidance for sharing knowledge (KOESTER and OLEBE, 2003).
<b>Negotiated culture</b> Earley e Ang (2003); Deardorff (2004); Barmeyer e Davoine (2015).	It is able to flexibilize the team reference, adapting it to the multicultural context, through a <b>negotiated culture</b> .	Flexibility (DEARDORFF, 2004); Adaptability (DEARDORFF, 2004); Negotiated culture (KIM, 1988; BARMEYER and DAVOINE, 2015); Ethno relative view- accept the existence and importance of cultural differences in the group (DEARDORFF, 2004); Openness to intercultural learning (DEARDORFF, 2004).

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

In short, considering the studies that were published in the analyzed period and three papers that have been highlighted as relevant for the analysis of the IC elements and dimensions, since they have been cited in several other references (DEARDORFF, 2004; FORTUNE and WHITE, 2006; MORAN, YOUNGDAHL and MORAN, 2009), it was possible to confirm that all the elements are present and it is possible to indicate the dimensions that integrate them. In order to define them, (a) dimensions that are circumscribed at the individual level were withdrawn, such as senior manager support and intercultural empathy; (b) dimensions represented by sentences with the same meaning were grouped together, such as clear and good communication; and (c) dimensions were linked to one or more IC elements.

## Interaction

Interaction stands out as the basis of intercultural daily life (BUENO, 2010) and should be understood as a relational process among interdependent individuals (DALIB, HARUN and YUSOFF, 2014). Rodrigues and Pinheiro (2010) argue that the epistemological current of IC has a strong interpretive and interactionist accent, an argument that is reiterated in the IC definitions, where several authors (BYRAM, 1997; HAMMER, BENNETT and WISEMAN, 2003; DEARDORFF, 2004; JOKIKOKKO,



2005; RATHJE, 2007; FITCH, 2012; KUPKA, 2008; SPITZBERG and CHANGNON, 2009), explain the interaction as a primary IC factor. Byram (1997) considers that one of the IC elements is the ability to interact; Jokikokko (2005) argues that IC is necessary in the functional interaction of people from different origins; Rathje (2007) argues that IC is the cultural skill required in the interactions among individuals of different cultures; Kupka (2008) adds that IC is fundamental for individuals to interact effectively in diverse cultural contexts; Fitch (2012) defends the need for social interaction among individuals from different cultures; Hammer, Bennett and Wiseman (2003) conclude by arguing that the individual with a high IC degree is capable of successful interactions in culturally diverse environments.

Likewise, Soboleva and Obdalova (2014) argue that the development of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) is fundamental for individuals to acquire experience in solving communication problems arising from intercultural interaction. Still focused on communication, Dusi, Messetti and Steinbach (2014) analyze the competences necessary for the proper management of interaction among individuals in multicultural contexts, and Kim (1988) states the need for competent communication in interaction with a representative from another culture.

Bücker and Poutsma (2010) present the interaction skills as one of the IC elements, Fantini (2000) complements that the IC is based on linguistic processes of interaction among the interlocutors, defending the need for competent interaction.

King and Baxter Magolda (2005) identify that initial levels of IC development present low levels of cultural awareness and sensitivity, representing less competent intercultural interaction modes. The authors further argue that individuals acquire more mature levels of IC by observing and interacting with members from other cultures. Imahori and Lanigan (1989) argue that the index of competent intercultural interaction will lead to satisfactory results in organizations.

In addition to the theoretical-empirical argument that group competencies are developed through interactions (FISCHER, GONDIM, PEREIRA et al., 2009) and that organizations are aware of the importance of both interaction within multicultural teams, as well as the preparation of its members to the specificities of such interaction (BITENCOURT and BUENO, 2015), it is worth analyzing some definitions of “social interaction”.

The literature presents several definitions of social interaction, but all of them go back to the idea that it would have to be mutually and interdependently carried out (RIBEIRO and AYRES, 2015). Social interaction is reciprocity, it's the conduct-response that makes others' conducts interactive (MONTMOLLIN, 1997 apud RIBEIRO and AYRES, 2015). According to Joseph (2000), social interaction can be defined through a set of aspects: units that interact with each other; a set of rules that structures and guides the units and the interaction itself; a system or orderly process of interaction; an environment in which the components present themselves and where there are systematic exchanges.

Social interaction can also be defined as the mutual influence between individuals who interact socially, where the behavior of one is stimulating to the behavior of others, by adding variables and characteristics of other people to the individual oneself, thus affecting one's production (BECKER, 1974).

The greater the participation of the individual in intercultural interactions, the more able one will be to go about his work routine and coexist with culturally different members of one's group (BUENO, 2010). However, according to the author, this interaction requires openness and detachment, especially when on an international mission, when the individual needs to adapt behaviors and customs.

MNCs have shown interest in the selection and training of intercultural competencies that will facilitate profitable forms of interaction (SPITZBERG and CHANGNON, 2009). Group competences are developed in the interaction between the group members (FISCHER, GONDIM, PEREIRA et al., 2009) and should be understood as a co-creation process between two individuals in interaction (DALIB, HARUN and YUSOFF, 2014).

In a nutshell, it can be concluded that coexisting with culturally different individuals in the same work team presupposes experiencing challenges in the interaction among the subjects (BUENO, 2010), and group competences develop through this interaction (FISCHER, GONDIM, PEREIRA et al., 2009). Gudykunst, Hammer and Wiseman (1977) also defend the importance of social interactions in the intercultural efficacy of individuals and groups.

Thus, interaction is a key element in the IC development process (FISCHER, GONDIM, PEREIRA et al., 2009; RODRIGUES and PINHEIRO, 2010; YASHIMA, 2010; HISMANOGLU, 2011; LOUGH, 2011; HOLMES and O'NEILL, 2012; BEHRND and

PORZELT, 2012; SUCHANKOVA, 2014; SOBOLEVA and OBDALOVA, 2014; NAZARENKO, 2014; DUSI, MESSETTI and STEINBACH, 2014; DALIB, HARUN and YUSOFF, 2014). IC is necessary to manage interaction among people in a multicultural context (DUSI, MESSETTI and STEINBACH, 2014), there is a need to develop interpersonal relationship capacities (FISCHER, GONDIM, PEREIRA et al., 2009; BEHRND and PORZELT, 2012), through the understanding of the other (RODRIGUES and PINHEIRO, 2010), the will to interact with people from different cultures (YASHIMA, 2010) and the reciprocity of the contact (LOUGH, 2011).

## Effectiveness

Competition in the globalized market poses challenges to organizations and a greater focus on their effectiveness (FINURAS and CEITIL, 1999; ORTIZ, 2000), as well as the effectiveness of their work teams in a multicultural context (ADLER and GUNDERSEN, 2008). Baring these work teams in mind, Adler and Gundersen (2008) argue that the efficiency in task execution varies, since each group has its own dynamics and a distinct context that exerts a direct influence on its performance. Therefore, the effectiveness of the multicultural team depends on: (a) how cultural diversity is addressed by group members and by the organization (ADLER and GUNDERSEN, 2008); (HAMMER, BENNETT, and WISEMAN, 2003), (b) the success of the social interaction of team members (HAMMER, GUDYKUNST and WISEMAN, 1979; GUDYKUNST and HAMMER, 1984) and (c) self-efficacy (YASHIMA, 2010).

Gudykunst, Hammer and Wiseman (1977) argue that intercultural effectiveness depends on factors as open-mindedness for new ideas, empathy, perception of cultural differences, non-ethnocentric posture, among others. Panggabean, Murniati and Tjitra (2013) argue that there are cultural divergences regarding the ease or difficulty of task-oriented effectiveness, with a focus on the groups' intercultural issues and how they affect IC development, and hence, the organization's positive performance. Converging with this position, Evans, Pucik and Barsoux (2002) posit that the integration among different cultures, as well as recognizing the impact of these differences on the team's performance has a direct influence on their effectiveness.

The social interaction of culturally diverse team members - both in professional environment and in social relationships outside the workplace - has a direct impact on the intercultural efficacy of individuals and groups (GUDYKUNST, HAMMER and WISEMAN, 1977; GERTSEN, 1990; GERTSEN and SODERBERG, 2011). Dinges and Baldwin (1996) and Gertsen (1990) feel that IC must be treated as the ability to function effectively in another culture and, according to Bennett (1986), this capacity generates appropriate behavior among culturally diverse members, leading to high performance.

Thus, in a multicultural context the efficacy of MCT depends on how the differences among culturally diverse group members are addressed (GUDYKUNST, HAMMER and WISEMAN, 1977; EVANS, PUCIK and BARSOUX, 2002; ADLER and GUNDERSEN, 2008; PANGGABEAN, MURNIATI and TJITRA, 2013).

The intercultural efficacy element presupposes satisfactory results through appropriate and effective behaviors in different cultures (DALIB, HARUN and YUSOFF, 2014), since strategies for action in multicultural environments lead to successful or unsuccessful results (BEHRND and PORZELT, 2012).

## Cultural differences

In a globalized and corporate context, cultural differences among group members emerge and impact their interaction (FREITAS, 2005). These cultural differences are related, according to the author, to attitudinal problems, mistrust among group members, difficulty in communication, among others.

Therefore, the management of team members' cultural differences is important for their positive results (CHEVRIER, 2000; KUPKA, 2008; PANGGABEAN, MURNIATI and TJITRA, 2013; BUENO and FREITAS, 2015), since these differences can act as: (a) an obstacle or source of creativity at MCT (PANGGABEAN, MURNIATI and TJITRA, 2013); (b) a group cohesion factor (ADLER and GUNDERSEN, 2008); (c) learning resources (FRIEDMAN and ANTAL, 2005); among others.

Since cultural differences are treated as one of the challenges in an MCT, Bueno and Freitas (2015) point out that the main challenge for the team is to overcome the encounter with the different and the lack of harmony between the pace of work and the different efforts to carry out the tasks. Furthermore, one of the characteristics of MNCs should be the concern for

local differences between the countries involved (BORINI and FLEURY, 2010) and respect for these differences (DALIB, HARUN and YUSOFF, 2014). As a key strategy in this multicultural scenario, the opportunity to understand national differences to ensure a strong local presence can be highlighted (BARTLETT and GHOSHAL, 1992).

In order to ensure that cultural differences can act as a driving force for MCTs high performance, it is necessary for its members to develop an ethno relative vision, which means that they need to accept the existence and importance of the group's cultural differences (DEARDORFF, 2004). Bennett (1986) argues that the development of this ethno relative vision, as opposed to the ethnocentric view, shows an evolution in the stages of IC development, where respect to cultural differences leads to a scenario of learning and group cohesion.

Therefore, in order to have a successful intercultural relationship, there must be an understanding of the cultural differences among the group members (FERRARO, 2001; ADLER and GUNDERSEN, 2008). The lack of such understanding can lead to cultural shock, generating discomfort and lack of cohesion in MCT (RODRIGUES and PINHEIRO, 2010).

Finally, since cultural differences represent a relevant factor in the MCT daily life and can have a positive or negative impact on the group's effectiveness, depending on how this difference is treated, the styles of verbal and non-verbal communication are one of the most striking differences in this context (FERRARO, 2001).

All in all, the cultural differences are listed as an IC element to be considered the basis of intercultural relations where cultural understanding and respect for these differences are seen as fundamental in intercultural situations (DALIB, HARUN and YUSOFF, 2014), through exposure to differences, misunderstandings and conflicts generated in multicultural interaction (BLASCO, FELDT and JAKOBSEN, 2012). In a globalized economy, the development of skills needed to cope with cultural differences are critical for success in international performance (MUZYCHENKO, 2008; BEHRND and PORZELT, 2012), as well as openness to different cultures and the willingness to interact with people from different nationalities, reinforcing a non-ethnocentric view and international awareness (YASHIMA, 2010).

## Communication

Communication between culturally distinct individuals is treated as one of the difficulties encountered when working in an MCT (FERRARO, 2001; BUECO, 2010; SUCHANKOVA, 2014; DUSI, MESSETTI and STEINBACH, 2014; SOBOLEVA and OBDALOVA, 2014). In addition to language differences, cultural differences impact ideas, attitudes, assumptions, perceptions and ways of doing things, greatly increasing the chances of communication failure (FERRARO, 2001). In the current scenario, where intercultural communication media and communication dynamics are fluid, this element requires continuous study (ARASARATNAM, 2015).

It is worth mentioning that a language mirrors the values of its culture (FERRARO, 2001; SODERBERG and HOLDEN, 2002; ADLER and GUNDERSEN, 2008; BRANNEN and THOMAS, 2010), and therefore, communication is influenced by attitudes, perceptions, stereotypes, interpretation and cultural shock. In order to function effectively in any culture, it is necessary to understand the social and cultural contexts in which this communication is taking place (BUENO, 2010; LLOYD e HÄRTEL, 2010; LOUGH, 2011; FITCH, 2012; FREITAS and DOS REIS, 2014).

In line with these arguments, Kim (1988) argues for the need for competent communication in the interaction between people from different cultures, and this communication is fundamental to the resolution of cultural conflicts arising from the interaction between the members of the MCT (BUENO, 2010), as well as for the adequate management of interaction among individuals in multicultural contexts (DUSI, MESSETTI and STEINBACH, 2014; SOBOLEVA and OBDALOVA, 2014). Knowledge of the different styles of communication, both verbal and non-verbal, is important in order to avoid misunderstandings about foreign culture (GERTSEN, 1990; SPITZBERG and CHANGNON, 2009).

Therefore, the promotion of effective communication is important in an MCT (BYRAM, 1997; FANTINI, 2000; MENDENHALL and OSLAND, 2002; DEARDORFF, 2004; LOUGH, 2011; FITCH, 2012) and this promotion can be leveraged through clarity, openness and frankness (MORAN, YOUNGDAHL and MORAN, 2009), key to group cohesion through the trust among its members (HAMMER, GUDYKUNST and WISEMAN, 1979; ADLER and GUNDERSEN, 2008; LLOYD and HÄRTEL, 2010; FREITAS, 2015).

Some factors are presented as determinants of effective MCT communication, such as constant feedback (MORAN, YOUNGDAHL and MORAN, 2009), sociolinguistic ability (DEARDORFF, 2004), accuracy in sending and receiving messages (DEARDORFF, 2004) and intercultural communication skills (BYRAM, 1997; MENDENHALL and OSLAND, 2002; BIRD, 2010; LOUGH, 2011; FITCH, 2012; SOBOLEVA and OBDALOVA, 2014).

Communication is thus presented as the basis for intercultural understanding, through which it is possible to learn about foreign cultures (FRANCIS and JEAN-FRANÇOIS, 2010; SUCHANKOVA, 2014) and to promote the management of multicultural interaction (DUSI, MESSETTI and STEINBACH, 2014).

The IC communication element concerns communication developed in social interaction between culturally distinct individuals (SUCHANKOVA, 2014; SOBOLEVA and OBDALOVA, 2014; NAZARENKO, 2014; DALIB, HARUN and YUSOFF, 2014) and interpersonal communication skills (YASHIMA, 2010; SUCHANKOVA, 2014; DUSI, MESSETTI and STEINBACH, 2014), as an instrument of knowledge of other cultures, as well as self-knowledge (HOLMES and O'NEILL, 2012), generating cultural awareness (DUSI, MESSETTI and STEINBACH, 2014) through a process of co-creation between culturally diverse interlocutors (DALIB, HARUN and YUSOFF, 2014).

## Learning

Intercultural learning is directly reflected in how the group's members interact with each other (BUENO, 2010) and the promotion of such learning drives high-level work in multicultural environments (LASONEN, 2005).

Intercultural experience is identified as a determinant in intercultural learning processes and occurs through cultural conflict situations, insofar as these conflicts are seen as opportunities for learning and development of IC and not as barriers to successful interactions (BLASCO, FELDT and JAKOBSEN, 2012). Francis and Jean-François (2010) point to individual competencies, specific attitudes and skills as driving factors that promote intercultural learning and, consequently, IC development.

The IC development process occurs through being open to intercultural learning and people from other cultures (DEARDORFF, 2004) and is based on: self-reflection (GERTSEN, 1990; SODERBERG and VAARA, 2003; GERTSEN and SODERBERG, 2011; GERTSEN and ZOLNER, 2012; BEHRND and PORZELT, 2012; LEUNG, ANG and TAN, 2014); management of cultural conflicts (BLASCO, FELDT and JAKOBSEN, 2012); experiences and interaction with natives of a given culture (HISMANOGLU, 2011), among others.

Spitzberg and Changnon (2009) argue that IC development varies as a function of the degree of absorption of the other culture. In order for the development to be translated into intercultural learning, the MCT must be able to learn meaningfully, generating innovative and creative responses to the challenges inherent to intercultural everyday life (FISCHER, GONDIM, PEREIRA et al., 2009).

Finally, if the learning process drives the EMC towards better results, and one of the main learning tools is based on the management of cultural conflicts, then obtaining a negotiated culture within the group can be considered as a learning result.

Thus, intercultural learning is treated as an IC element based on the assumption that it is a process of developing intercultural knowledge through experiences and interactions among culturally diverse individuals (FRANCIS and JEAN-FRANÇOIS, 2010; HISMANOGLU, 2011; BLASCO, FELDT and JAKOBSEN, 2012; SUCHANKOVA, 2014), where the factor of motivation interferes directly with that learning (BLASCO, FELDT and JAKOBSEN, 2012).

## Negotiated culture

The negotiation process between cultures in the MCT is part of intercultural daily life, directly impacting group communication and social interaction (FERRARO, 2001). In addition, negotiation style is conditioned by the culture itself (KIM, 1988; FITCH, 2012; BARMAYER and DAVOINE, 2015). This in turn means that the form of negotiation is marked by cultural presuppositions (FERRARO, 2001; DE JONG and VAN HOUTEN, 2014), in which there are divergences of values, interests, objectives, ethical principles and cultural assumptions (FERRARO, 2001).

Some personal attributes facilitate the negotiation process of group culture. Fitch (2012) argues that these attributes consist of open personality, flexibility and adaptability, fluency in other languages, and knowledge of other cultures. These individual attributes impact the group negotiation process, and the management of both attributes and cultural differences can minimize the difficulties in establishing and maintaining negotiations in MCT (DE JONG and VAN HOUTEN, 2014), thus

ensuring positive results and avoiding misunderstandings in relation to work techniques and cultural conflicts (BARMMEYER and DAVOINE, 2015).

Strategies for improving intercultural negotiation are based on building relationships through social interaction; in developing a sensitivity to cultural differences, and hence flexibility and commitment; in intercultural communication; and the establishment of institutionalized processes and practices (FERRARO, 2001; BARMMEYER and DAVOINE, 2015).

Finally, Barmeyer and Davoine (2015) argue that there is a tendency in the MNTs to create a culture that is negotiated among the culturally diverse group members, based on cooperation and hybrid work practices that are also negotiated across the diverse cultures of the team -- in so doing defining a unique culture institutionalized by its members.

The IC refers to the cognitive understanding of a cultural system and also to the analytical and strategic elements that broaden the interpretation and scope of a person's action in order to interact appropriately with individuals from other cultures. The actors' IC influences and promotes intercultural negotiation and learning processes in a positive way (BARMMEYER and DAVOINE, 2015).

Converging with this argument, Earley and Ang (2003) present IC as a meta competence that allows the agents to look at structures, objects and interactions from an affective distance that permits reflection and understanding of the intercultural experience, allowing for situational adjustments of their actions and finding alternative solutions that are negotiated between the agents (EARLEY and ANG, 2003).

The negotiated culture is linked to the conflict resolution processes generated by the cultural encounter (BEHRND and PORZELT, 2012; POLAT and METIN, 2012), which is directly related to personal attributes such as adaptation and flexibility (FITCH, 2012).

Following the analysis and description of each IC element, these data were used to consider migration from a concept based on individual logic to a collective logic to underpin a concept of group order.

These were the results of the dimensions involved in the elements that comprise IQ and can be conceived both in individual and collective terms (group or organizational). Based on these data, it is proposed that:

- Group Intercultural Competence (GIC) is the group's ability to effectively achieve its objectives through social interaction, efficient communication and negotiation of cultural differences, resulting from a group learning process in a multicultural context (LANE and DISTEFANO, 2000; GERTSEN, 1990; DINGES and BALDWIN, 1996; BYRAM, 1997; BENNETT, 1986; FANTINI, 2000; MENDENHALL and OSLAND, 2002; EARLEY and ANG, 2003; DEARDORFF, 2004; FRIEDMAN and ANTAL, 2005; JOKIKOKKO, 2005; MORAN, YOUNGDAHL and MORAN, 2009; BIRD, 2010; LOUGH, 2011; FITCH, 2012; BARMMEYER and DAVOINE, 2015).

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this essay a concept for GIC based on the IC literature was proposed. This proposal was motivated by the extant broad variation of definitions involving IC at the individual level that exist, and the lack of a concept for IC at a group level, under an integrative perspective, that encompassed the interactions of MCT members.

In order to propose a concept, some reflections were necessary:

- How to operationalize intercultural competence beyond the individual dimension?
- When is a group or organization interculturally competent?

The origin and evolution analysis of the studies on intercultural competence shed light on a direction for interaction relevance from a perspective of development. However, despite this trend in the field (work in IC through interaction among individuals and groups) the vast majority of research involving IC still has a predominantly cognitive and behavioral focus, at the individual level.

However, when dealing with a GIC it is necessary to include the cultural dimension, since the GIC is developed in the interaction between its members, and it is necessary to consider a social perspective of competence development that looks at culture and interactions. After all, in the development of competence in intercultural management, the integration principles, complementarity, continuity and recursion should be considered (FISCHER, GONDIM, PEREIRA et al., 2009).



By surveying definitions of IC in the literature, it is possible to identify the elements of definitions at the individual level that could migrate to the collective. To that end, the definitions that comprised the group as most relevant, even implicitly, were selected. Based on these definitions, the elements of GIC were identified: interaction, effectiveness, cultural differences, communication, learning and negotiated culture.

For each element of GIC, based on a survey conducted in the Brazilian and international literature up to the period data collection for the present, the dimensions that comprise it in group logic were selected. Some of these dimensions were grouped when represented by different phrases, but with the same meaning. This analysis generated a framework with the definitions, elements, dimensions and the respective authors of IC studies.

Finally, based on research carried out as a result of our identification of a gap in the theory on IC at the group level, it was possible to propose a concept for GIC from the elements and dimensions listed in the literature. The concept proposes to consider GIC as a group competence (group level) to achieve its objectives effectively (element of effectiveness) through social interaction (element interaction), efficient communication (element of communication) and the negotiation of cultural differences (negotiated culture and cultural differences), resulting from a group learning process (learning element) in a multicultural context. It is worth emphasizing that these elements are sensitive to the level of the group: they involve coexistence in the negotiation process, and hence the group effectiveness, indeed, the effectiveness of elements that were thought of for the collective logic, are also contingent upon level. Thus, for example, when it comes to the element of *cultural differences*, the resulting dimensions of research as a global mentality (BÜCKER and POUTSMA, 2010); intellectual and cultural resources management (MORAN, YOUNGDAHL and MORAN, 2009); and team members engagement (FRIEDMAN and ANTAL, 2005) do not refer to the individual's ability to think globally, manage resources, and engage in the team. Rather, these dimensions refer to whether and how the group performs these activities, whether or not it is difficult to achieve them, and if the group is able to recognize and optimize cultural differences as a resource for learning and for creating effective actions in specific contexts.

This concept is conducive to new research can be performed at different levels of analysis beyond the individual. The collective logic of IC development required that it be thought of from an epistemology that privileged group dynamics and, accordingly, social interaction was chosen as the space in which such a dynamic occurs. Although grounded in the IC literature, which is predominantly individual, the proposed concept does not consider that the bases of both individual and group IC should be the same; differences are nonetheless considered, without ignoring that individuals make up the group. For this impasse, interaction was the bridge that allowed migration to the collective.

This study has as a limitation the periodicals chosen for inclusion; further studies should extend this research based on other Brazilian and international journals.

Finally, it is intended that the concept proposed here may represent new possibilities for research and also stimulate different theoretical-empirical studies, mainly in the Brazilian context, where research is scarce. Further research is necessary to analyze the proposed concept, to verify if the elements and the dimensions are present and in what form they are presented, and in diverse organizational contexts. Research on multinational companies, in particular, can benefit from this conceptual proposal. Future research may contribute to the advancement of this field of knowledge by qualitative investigations into how multicultural teams develop GIC, or through quantitative assessments measuring the extent to which elements and dimensions are present. Methodologically, it should be stressed that future research needs to take into account the results of the various individuals that coexist in groups in an integrated and not isolated way, since the result of group phenomena are not represented by the sum of individual phenomena -- they imply synergy. That is, to study GIC, according to the proposed concept, means to consider how different individuals culturally learn to perform their tasks collectively, in daily life and in social interaction. Simply put, the essence of GIC concept, as it currently stands, differs significantly from individual IC studies and needs to move forward to create a *corpus* of studies.



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