

# **Cultural Intelligence in the Globalized Work Environment**

Leslie Ottavi

December 1, 2009

## **Abstract**

Cultural intelligence is the “capability of an individual to function effectively in situations characterized by cultural diversity” as defined by Earley and Ang (Ang and Van Dyne 2008). There are three key conceptual models of cultural intelligence that present similar views of the attributes needed to thrive in culturally diverse work environments. These include Earley, Ang, and Van Dyne’s four-factor model, Earley and Mosakowski’s best practice, and Thomas and Inkson’s global management approach. Suspending judgment, integrity, openness, and hardiness are personal attributes that complement an individual’s effort to acquire cultural intelligence. Global businesses benefit from workers who are culturally intelligent because they can be more effective in culturally diverse teams in their home countries, spanning multiple countries, or in overseas assignments. Effective culturally diverse teams position organizations to achieve their business goals by delivering more rapid responses to a dynamic global marketplace. Cultural intelligence is a best practice.

Diversity in the work environment continues to grow as organizations globalize, no matter the business organization's geographical location. In light of this growing diversity, it is important to understand why some individuals are more effective than others when they are in multicultural situations so that those skills that are effective can be shared and learned by others. The performance of business organizations around the world requires a high degree of cultural awareness in their employees, whether they are establishing a global presence or they have a growing diversity of workplace demographics. There are many different forms of organizations that are emerging to facilitate globalization and they all require cross-national interdependence, which usually leads to multicultural teams (MCTs) nested at various levels of the organization (Ang and Van Dyne 2008).

Examples abound in the business world that demonstrates the need to understand and develop cultural intelligence. For instance, Thomas and Kerr (2004) provide several examples that might be easy to identify with:

- A British company trying to run a Japanese subsidiary experiences inexplicable problems of morale and conflict with its Japanese workforce. This seems out of character with the usual politeness and teamwork of the Japanese. Later it is found that the British manager of the operation in Japan is not taken seriously because she is a woman.
- A Canadian manager faces difficulties because his five key subordinates are, respectively, French-Canadian, Indian, Italian-American, Chinese, and Iraqi. How can he treat them equitably? How can he find a managerial style that works with all of them? How should he chair meetings?

- An American couple about to take up a new assignment in Sri Lanka spends an evening visiting a Sri Lankan couple to whom they have been introduced by a friend. They want to “get a feel for” the Sri Lankan people. Their hosts are gracious and hospitable but much more reserved than the Americans are used to. The Americans feel awkward and find it hard to make conversation. Later, they panic because they realize how inept they felt in dealing with the Sri Lankans.

We now operate in a multicultural world whether we work in our native homeland or we work in another country. We are all involved in a global world. Globalization means that countries, economies, industries, and organizations can no longer rely on traditional boundaries. The business environment has seen globalization accelerate as new international agreements are negotiated, international trade increases, multinational organizations grow, organizations are restructured and downsized, state enterprises are privatized, and international migration expands. Technological information and communication advances have facilitated locating businesses wherever the cost is lowest because business transactions can be executed instantaneously on a global basis. Time and distance are transcended. Even very small firms are now capable of being global businesses, especially with the ecommerce business model. The impact of globalization on the business environment is more complexity, more dynamism, more uncertainty, and more competition than ever before in the world’s history. There is no end to the globalization trend and no insight that says it will decrease or reverse. Globalization is the world’s reality (Thomas and Inkson 2004).

The day-to-day activities of global business involve interactions and relationships with people who are culturally diverse. In business today we might travel overseas to conduct work in different cultures and communicate with people from other cultures by phone or by email. Our

colleagues, subordinates, and contacts probably represent a range of different cultural backgrounds from different countries or ethnic groups. The globalization of people challenges everyone in the workplace as we identify and surmount the legal, political, and economic aspects of business like trade barriers and information exchange. Culture is largely invisible and cultural boundaries are an aspect of business that is often overlooked. Whether an individual has done business or travelled leisurely abroad, the individual is a global worker or manager because the globe has come to them (Thomas and Inkson 2004).

People in business must acquire the ability to feel comfortable when dealing with people from other cultures, to know what to say, and to know how to behave. Cultivating the same relaxed and synergistic success in business relationships that we have in our own culture should be the expectation for our other cultural business relationships. Some people may think that we should just expect others to adapt to our way, the *Be Like Me* policy. The arguments for this approach are that the dominant culture may “win” anyway and that cultures are converging into some common norm. Some observers say the whole world will be like the United States. However, there is no compelling evidence that any convergence is occurring and using the *Be Like Me* approach will lead the individual to be considered insensitive to others. Understanding cultural differences using a checklist of cultural information about a particular country can provide some basic understanding, but it is only a beginning. There are significant variances within any country as one can see from just looking at the regional differences in the United States. The essence of culture is more subtle, which makes it hard to express in words written on a page (Thomas and Inkson 2004).

A more compelling approach is to become culturally intelligent. Cultural intelligence is defined in many ways by theorists. Earley and Ang defined cultural intelligence as the

“capability of an individual to function effectively in situations characterized by cultural diversity” (Ang and Van Dyne 2008). Earley and Mosakowski (2004) related it to an observation of someone from outside the culture who has a “seemingly natural ability to interpret someone’s unfamiliar and ambiguous gestures in just the way that person’s compatriots and colleagues would, or even to mirror them.” Thomas and Inkson (2004) defined cultural intelligence as being skilled and flexible about understanding culture, learning more about a culture from an individual’s interactions with it, gradually reshaping how an individual thinks about culture to be more sympathetic, and changing how an individual behaves to be more appropriate during cross-cultural interactions. Each of these definitions is associated with conceptual models that seek to explain what attributes enable people to thrive in culturally diverse settings and subsequently how one can cultivate those attributes. A summary of the three models is presented in the table 1.0 shown on the next page.

<b>Four-Factor Model Earley &amp; Ang (2003) Ang &amp; Van Dyne (2008)</b>	<b>Best Practice Earley &amp; Mosakowski (2004)</b>	<b>Global Management Thomas &amp; Inkson (2004)</b>
Metacognitive CQ – an individual’s cultural consciousness and awareness during interactions with others from different cultural backgrounds.	Cognitive (head) - Learning strategies which allow individuals to notice clues to a culture’s shared understandings.	Mindfulness – the ability to pay attention in a reflective and creative way to cues in cross-cultural situations.
Cognitive CQ – an individual’s cultural knowledge of norms, practices, and conventions in different cultural settings.		Knowledge – Knowledge of culture and the fundamental principles of cross-cultural interactions. Knowing what is culture, how it varies, and how it affects behavior.
Motivational CQ – an individual’s capability to direct attention and energy toward cultural differences.	Emotional/Motivational (heart) – an individual’s belief that they are capable of understanding people from unfamiliar cultures and can overcome any obstacles.	Behavioral Skills – adapting behavior to act appropriately and successfully in a range of cross-cultural situations. To have the confidence to respond both in words and in action in a way that would be authentic, but also sensitive to others from different cultures.
Behavioral CQ – an individual’s capability to exhibit appropriate verbal and nonverbal actions during interactions with others from different cultural background.	Physical (body) – an individual’s actions and demeanor must prove that they have already to some extent entered the different culture.	

Table 1.0 Cultural Intelligence Conceptual Models Summary

### Four-Factor Model

Ang and Van Dyne’s four-factor model of cultural intelligence (CQ) provides a framework to understand what individual characteristics and skills assist the development of social cohesiveness and individual performance in multicultural situations. This multidimensional concept of CQ includes metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral factors. The four-factor model of CQ is based on Sternberg and Detterman’s (1986) framework of the multiple foci of intelligence whose contemporary views of intelligence as complex, multifactor, individual attributes are mirrored in the metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and

behavior factors. Exploring the four-factor model more in depth will provide a deeper understanding of the characteristics and skills that make an individual cross-culturally effective (Ang and Van Dyne 2008).

Metacognitive CQ relates to an individual's cultural awareness on a conscious level during a cross-cultural situation. An individual with a high metacognitive CQ will consciously question cultural assumptions when interacting in a cross-cultural situation and adjust their cultural knowledge of the other culture. The higher-level cognitive strategies of metacognitive CQ allow individuals to develop new experience-based techniques and rules for social interactions when interacting in a new cultural environment because information processing is achieved at a deeper level (Ang and Van Dyne 2008).

An example of high metacognitive CQ in action is when a Western business executive is aware, vigilant, and mindful regarding the appropriate time to speak up during meetings with Asian business executives. The high metacognitive culturally intelligent Western business executive would usually observe the interactions and the communication style of the Asian business executives, for instance when they take turns talking, and would contemplate what constituted appropriate behavior before speaking up (Ang and Van Dyne 2008).

Metacognitive CQ is a critical component of cultural intelligence for several reasons. First, it promotes thinking actively about people and the situations in different cultural settings. Individuals who exhibit metacognitive CQ acquire and understand cultural knowledge, including knowledge of and control over their own thought processes relating to culture. Second, it actively challenges an individual's rigid reliance on culturally bounded thinking and assumptions. Third, it compels individuals to adapt and revise their own strategies to be more culturally appropriate and more likely to achieve their goals during cross-cultural interactions. Planning, monitoring,

and revising mental models of cultural norms for countries or groups of people are relevant capabilities. Cultural assumptions are questioned and these individuals adjust their mental models during and after relevant experiences (Ang and Van Dyne 2008).

Cognitive CQ reflects the knowledge of norms, practices, and conventions that are associated with different cultures that have been acquired through educational and personal experiences. The level of cultural knowledge and knowledge of the cultural environment that an individual possesses is cognitive CQ. This includes the knowledge of oneself in the cultural context of the environment. There is a wide variety of cultures in the world and an individual's cognitive CQ includes perceiving culturally universal knowledge as well as the knowledge of the cultural differences (Ang and Van Dyne 2008).

Large variations in culture have been documented by cultural anthropologists; however, at a higher level of abstraction, cultures share some common features that are cultural universals. For instance, humans desire to meet basic physiological needs is exhibited by all societies. In order to meet those basic physiological needs, societies have economic systems to produce and distribute vital products and services. Mating and child-rearing practices that create marriage, family, and other social systems are codified by societies. Societies transmit learning and cultural transmission through educational systems. Obedience to social norms to reduce anarchy and destruction are reflected in political, legal, and social control systems. Language and communication systems that are verbal and nonverbal are developed to facilitate interaction. Finally, there are systems for explaining the unexplainable within societies that may often rely on supernatural beliefs such as religion and witchcraft to explain the phenomena (Ang and Van Dyne 2008).

Cognitive CQ is a critical component of cultural intelligence because people's thoughts and behaviors are influenced by their knowledge of culture. Individuals are better able to appreciate the systems that shape and cause specific patterns of social interaction within a culture when they increase their cognitive CQ. This can make those individuals more effective during their interactions with people from culturally different societies (Ang and Van Dyne 2008).

Motivational CQ is an individual's capability to direct attention and energy to learn about and function in culturally diverse situations. It includes an individual's interest in experiencing other cultures and the degree to which one is capable of effective interaction with people from different cultural backgrounds. Motivational CQ encompasses the intangible benefits that an individual places on culturally diverse interactions, which are the individual's level of enjoyment and personal satisfaction. The tangible benefits are those benefits that are instrumental to an individual's goals when interacting with people who are culturally different. High motivational CQ includes an individual's sense of confidence. A higher level of confidence helps an individual to be more effective in different cultural environments and with people who have different culture backgrounds than their own (Ang and Van Dyne 2008).

Motivational CQ is a critical component of cultural intelligence because it is an individual's source of drive. It engages an individual's effort and energy to ensure functioning in new cultural settings. An example would be a Chinese business executive who has a good understanding of the Japanese and enjoys interacting with people from other cultures, and who would not hesitate to initiate a conversation with a Japanese colleague. Another Chinese executive who is new to learning about the Japanese and does not like interacting with people from different cultures would be less likely to initiate a conversation with a Japanese colleague (Ang and Van Dyne 2008). One must be motivated to raise one's level of cultural intelligence.

Behavioral CQ is an individual's capability to adapt verbal and nonverbal behavior when interacting with people from different cultures. It involves having a range of flexible behavioral responses that are appropriate in cross-cultural situations. Examples of non-verbal behaviors are body language, gestures, and facial expressions. Examples of verbal behaviors are accent, tone, and expressiveness. These verbal and nonverbal behaviors are the most important features of social interactions, so behavioral CQ is a critical component of cultural intelligence (Ang and Van Dyne 2008).

Behavioral CQ complements metacognitive and cognitive cultural understanding and motivation. An individual's mental capabilities help the individual to exhibit appropriate verbal and nonverbal actions based on the cultural values of a specific situation. During a face-to-face interaction, individuals do not have access to each other's underlying thoughts, feelings, or motivation. However, they can interpret what they see and hear in the other person's vocal, facial, and other outward expressions. The range of cultural behaviors can vary due to the behaviors that are enacted, the displayed rules that govern when and under what circumstances specific nonverbal expressions are required, preferred, permitted, or prohibited, and the interpretations of nonverbal behaviors. When individuals modify their behavior based on cultural difference, they put others at ease and because behavioral expressions are especially important in cross-cultural encounters, behavioral CQ may be the most critical factor that is assessed by observers of an individual's cultural intelligence (Ang and Van Dyne 2008).

### **Best Practice Model**

Earley and Ang were the leaders in developing the concept of cultural intelligence with the four-factor model in 2003. Earley and Mosakowski (2004) applied the four-factor model as a best practice for cultural intelligence that can guide business managers to learn to cope with

different national, corporate, and vocational cultures. Cultural intelligence is a vitally important skill and aptitude, and not just for international business people, but for every business person in a world where crossing cultural boundaries is routine. Earley and Mosakowski's (2004) best practice is based on the three components of cultural intelligence: the cognitive, the physical, and the emotional/motivational. They relate these components to their sources: the mind, the body, and the heart respectively.

Corporate training programs tend to favor factual learning strategies that provide a baseline of information about a foreign country's beliefs, customs, and taboos. This baseline will not, however, provide the individual with enough information to deal with various situations as they arise and it may not help prevent terrible blunders. It is also difficult to try to engage native peoples about the meanings of some customs as they may be reluctant to explain themselves to strangers or do not have much experience in analyzing their own culture (Earley and Mosakowski 2004).

Earley and Mosakowski (2004) extend the baseline needed for the cognitive component of cultural intelligence to include what they call "learning strategies." When most people are placed into an alien culture, it may be quite difficult to find a characteristic or aspect of the alien culture that gains access to feeling part of the alien culture and not part of a separate or parallel world. When an individual has high cognitive CQ, the individual can leverage learning strategies in which clues are noticed that provide insights into a culture's shared understandings. It is a technique where the clues are recognized and determined to be a worthy line of interpretation.

An example that shows the effectiveness of learning strategies for an individual with high cognitive CQ is the experience of an Irish manager in an international advertising firm. The manager's new client was a German construction and engineering company. The manager had

previous experience working with German companies in the retail clothing industry which revealed that this particular German industry was reasonably flexible about deadlines and receptive to highly creative advertising campaign proposals. He had also worked with a British construction and engineering firm that was very strict about their deadlines and focused on media campaigns that showed the firm's technical expertise and cost savings for its customers.

Since the manager's past experiences provided conflicting information, he was not sure how to proceed. The German construction and engineering company could lean toward the British firm's culture or toward the German retail clothing industry firm's culture, or some other cultural characteristics. The manager decided to observe his new client representative's behavior very closely to see if he could draw some general conclusions about the firm's culture. He had effectively used this same approach with the other two clients. Each meeting with the new client was with a different representative and each representative came from different business units and had been raised in different countries. The manager met this challenge by looking for consistencies between the representatives' behaviors and was able to determine that they were all deadline-oriented, punctual, and receptive to innovative advertising messages. This provided the manager with knowledge about the general character and culture of the firm, demonstrating the effectiveness of learning strategies to gain cognitive CQ (Earley and Mosakowski 2004).

Simply knowing about one's foreign clients, guests, or colleagues cultures will not win them over. An individual must demonstrate entry into the foreign world to some extent through their actions and demeanor. The physical component of CQ is the aspect by which an individual demonstrates a level of cultural intelligence to the outside world. It may be shown in the way hands are shaken, the way coffee is ordered, or the tone of an inquiry, but these behaviors can show an individual's ability to mirror the customs and gestures of foreign people. When an

individual adopts foreign peoples' habits and mannerisms, it shows esteem and a desire to be like them. In addition, an individual is able to understand what it is like to be one of them in a very elemental way. This creates a more trusting and open environment for a relationship (Earley and Mosakowski 2004).

Of course, if an individual has reservations about a particular behavior or lacks the poise necessary to actually exhibit the behavior, then a more trusting and open environment would not happen. An example is a French manager who follows his national custom of greeting his female clients with a hug and a kiss on both cheeks. A female British manager aware of the national custom is very uncomfortable with the behavior and her discomfort is revealed in the stiffness and slight recoil of her body even though she tries to receive the behavior graciously. When an individual is unable to receive and reciprocate cultural gestures it reflects low physical CQ (Earley and Mosakowski 2004). It is very fitting that Earley and Mosakowski link this component to its source in the body as demonstrated in this example.

The process of adapting is not without its share of ups and downs when one begins the journey with a new culture. One must believe in their own ability to persevere and overcome a challenging situation when obstacles or setbacks are encountered. If they have done it before, they have built up their confidence to extend the process to a variety of situations. When a person has confidence then there will be high motivation to confront challenges with great vigor; whether success or failure, a person will learn from the experiences. High emotional/motivational CQ is expressed by highly efficacious people who are able to garner their emotional resources in the face of any challenge (Earley and Mosakowski 2004).

## **Global Management Model**

The head, body, and heart must work together to express high cultural intelligence as seen in Earley and Mosakowski's best practice model. Their model is supported by the components of Thomas and Inkson's global management model of cultural intelligence: mindfulness, knowledge, and behavioral skills. The global manager of today and tomorrow must exhibit the flexibility to adapt behaviors for each new cultural situation faced through knowledge and mindfulness. Increasing one's skills in these components of culture intelligence will make one more effective in the global workplace environment (Thomas and Inkson 2005).

The knowledge component of cultural intelligence requires that an individual gain understanding about the aspects of culture, how it varies, and how it affects behavior in cross-cultural interactions. Culture is the values, attitudes, customs, and behavioral norms that are shared by specific groups of people. Understanding our own culture, learning about another culture, and then determining the differences provides an individual with knowledge that is a first step to becoming culturally intelligent.

Attention must be paid in a reflective and creative way to cues in cross-cultural situations once an individual has gained knowledge of a culture. Mindfulness in this manner means discarding rigid mental programming so that one can see a broader view of the world. It does not mean that we abandon who we are, but rather we become aware of differences and begin to think differently. It is also important to be mindful of similarities that may exist, as they may help to minimize the impact of the differences.

Several facets of a cross-cultural interaction can be focused on simultaneously when someone is mindful. One must be aware of any assumptions, ideas, and emotions, including the lens through which information is filtered. It is like stepping into another's shoes so that one can

perceive that person's assumptions, ideas, and emotions. Use *all* senses to evaluate the situation and do not rely solely on hearing the words. Try to view the situation from several perspectives and approach the situation with an open mind. Pay attention to the context in which the situation is unfolding. Create new mental maps of other people's personalities and cultural backgrounds so that responses are appropriate. Continue to refine one's system of categorizing others by seeking out fresh information so that the system of categorization becomes more sophisticated. Be empathetic so the other person's perspectives can be understood from their cultural background. The key to mindfulness is linking knowledge with skillful practice that provides a degree of personal control and greater freedom of thought and action (Thomas and Inkson 2005).

As key as knowledge and mindfulness are in cultural intelligence, they are not enough because others see and judge cultural intelligence by behavior. So cultural intelligence is not only in the mind, one must be able to perform. Most common causes of problems in business are not technical or administrative deficiencies, but rather communication failures, misunderstanding in negotiations, personality conflicts, poor leadership style, and poor teamwork. These are all inadequacies that are related to the ways people interact with one another, reflecting the importance of behavioral skills. One must be adaptable because each cross-cultural situation will be unique and will involve interacting with others who are in themselves unique. High behavioral skills will enable an individual to adapt a general approach or specific interaction instantaneously to fit the characteristics and expectations of the people involved in the situation (Thomas and Inkson 2005).

Cultural intelligence as reflected in Earley, Ang, and Van Dyne's four-factor model, Earley and Mosakowski's best practice, and Thomas and Inkson's global management model is paramount to an individual's success in a globalized work environment. Each of these conceptual

models has explained what attributes enable people to thrive in culturally diverse settings.

Understanding these attributes is the beginning. The current level of an individual's cultural intelligence must be understood so that the attributes that will extend their cultural intelligence to a greater degree can be cultivated.

## **Application of Concepts**

Earley and Mosakowski (2004) have created a set of six cultural intelligence profiles; most managers fit at least one. These profiles can provide a broad analysis of an individual's cultural intelligence level and are represented in the table below.

<b>Profile</b>	<b>Description</b>
The Provincial	Can be quite effective when working with people of similar background, but runs into trouble in a broader field.
The Analyst	Methodically decodes a foreign culture's rules and expectations by resorting to a variety of elaborate learning strategies.
The Natural	Relies entirely on his intuition and first impressions rather than on a systematic learning style. May falter in ambiguous multicultural situations.
The Ambassador	Upon entering a culture he doesn't know much about, he convincingly communicates his certainty that he belongs there through very powerful confidence and the humility to know what he doesn't know.
The Mimic	High degree of control over his actions and behavior. Great deal of insight into significance of cultural cues picked up. Puts hosts and guests at ease, facilitates communication, and builds trust.
The Chameleon	Possesses high levels of all three CQ components and is a very uncommon managerial type. May even be mistaken for a native. Possesses insider skills and outsider perspectives.

Table 2.0 Cultural Intelligence Profiles

There are hybrids of the six cultural intelligence profiles listed above and there are many managers who fit two or more of them. In Earley and Mosakowski's study of more than two thousand managers, they found that the Ambassador was the most common type in multinational companies. Strikingly, the study also revealed that even more common was a hybrid of the Ambassador and the Analyst, showing the prevalence of managers who were hybrids. These

profiles are useful to help an individual identify their level of cultural intelligence and to learn their relative strengths and weaknesses. Appendix A contains a simple assessment tool that can provide a starting point for diagnosing an individual's level of cultural intelligence and to determine a profile so that cultural intelligence can be cultivated. In addition, Appendix B provides Ang and Van Dyne's self-assessment approach.

Cultural intelligence is now a fundamental management skill which needs to be developed by progressing through a series of stages. These stages range from simple reactions to external stimuli to behavioral adjustments in anticipation of subtle changes in a cultural context. The stages are reactivity, recognition, accommodation, assimilation, and proactivity (Thomas and Kerr 2005).

Stage one is reactivity, a starting point where an individual simply reacts to external stimuli by following home cultural rules and norms. At this stage, an individual may have had very little exposure or interest in other cultures. Some individuals may not even recognize that cultural differences exist, or they find them inconsequential. One might hear people at this stage say things like "I don't see differences" and "I treat everyone the same" (Thomas and Kerr 2005).

Stage two is recognition of other cultural norms and motivation to learn more about those cultures. An individual becomes mindful of the multicultural world and the wealth of new information that is available as experience is gained. At this stage, curiosity is stirred and an individual wants to learn more. During this stage it may be a struggle to sort through the complexity of various cultural environments while trying to search for simple rules to guide behavior (Thomas and Kerr 2005).

Stage three is accommodation of other cultural norms and rules. An individual begins to develop a deeper understanding of cultural variations and reliance on absolutes disappears. The cultural norms and rules of other societies start to be comprehensible and reasonable in their context. Appropriate behavioral responses to different cultural situations develop, but it takes some effort and may feel awkward. Individuals at this stage know what to say and how to behave in a culturally diverse situations, but they have to think about it and it may not feel natural (Thomas and Kerr 2005).

Stage four is assimilation of diverse culture norms into alternative behaviors. Individuals develop a collection of behaviors from which response choices can be selected for a specific cultural situation. The adjustment to different situations no longer requires much effort. Functioning in a number of different cultural situations no longer causes any more stress than the individual would have in a home culture. An individual in stage four is accepted by members of another culture as being culturally knowledgeable and is comfortable interacting with them. An individual in stage four can feel at home almost anywhere (Thomas and Kerr 2005).

Stage five is proactivity in cultural behavior based on recognition of changing cues that others do not perceive. Individuals can automatically adjust behavior to anticipate nuances of intercultural interactions because of the ability to sense changes in cultural context even before members of the foreign culture. This ability helps stage five individuals facilitate better exchanges because they intuitively know what behaviors are required and how to effectively execute them. This is a level of cultural intelligence to which we all might aspire but it is quite rare for an individual to achieve this stage of development (Thomas and Kerr 2005).

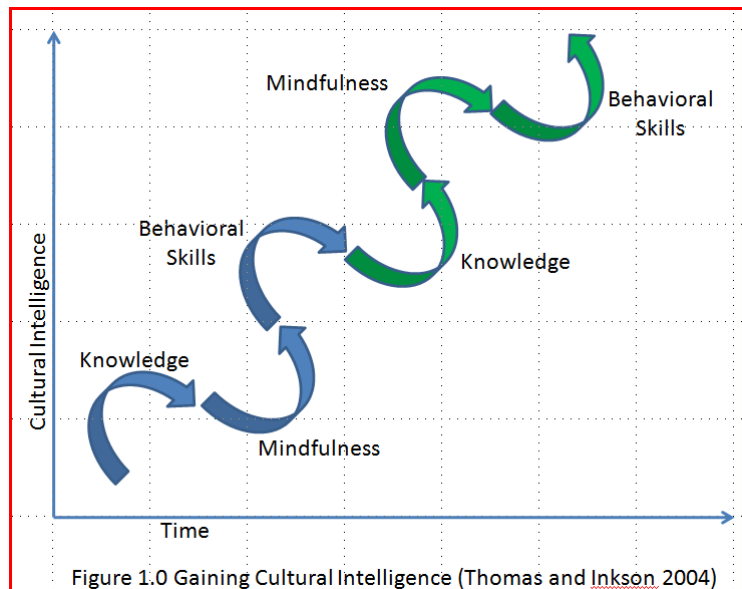
One of the most important attributes to cultivate as individuals progress through the stages is the ability to suspend judgment until enough information is available (Triandis 2006).

Our own narrow thinking about how to interact effectively across cultures limits our ability to learn what is needed to develop cultural intelligence (Thomas and Kerr 2005). There are other attributes that an individual may already possess that can help develop cultural intelligence. These attributes include integrity, openness, and hardiness. Integrity means that an individual has a well-developed sense of self and an understanding of how the individual's belief system impacts behavior. An individual needs an honest self-understanding as a fundamental base for cultural intelligence. Openness means an individual has the humility to show deferential respect, a willingness to learn from others, and curiosity to investigate and pursue knowledge. Hardiness is the ability to weather stress, recover from shocks, and perceive stressful events as interesting opportunities to grow and learn. The attributes of suspending judgment, integrity, openness, and hardiness can support an individual through all stages of cultural development (Thomas and Kerr 2004).

The process of developing cultural intelligence is not linear, as it requires time for reiterative experience-based learning. An individual begins with a base level of knowledge, acquires new knowledge and perspectives through mindfulness, and transforms gained knowledge into behavioral skills.

This process can be thought of as a

series of S curves and it is iterative as shown in Figure 1.0 (Thomas and Inkson 2004).



Experience-based learning through social interactions helps one to acquire cultural intelligence. Social learning has long been known to be a very powerful way in which an individual's experiences are transferred into knowledge and skills. To learn socially, one must pay attention to the situation, retain the knowledge gained from the situation, reproduce the behavioral skills that were observed, and reinforce the effectiveness of the adapted behavior. Improving cultural intelligence takes time as implied in the dimension of time in Figure 1.0 and one must be motivated to take the time (Thomas and Inkson 2004).

There are many activities that facilitate the process of developing cultural intelligence. Formal education and training, cross-cultural interactions at home, overseas experiences and expatriate assignments, and participation in cross-cultural groups and teams are some of the many activities that help to develop cultural intelligence.

Formal education and training is available in many forms which can be classified according to the extent that they are experience-based or culturally specific. The forms of training available include factual, analytical, and experience-based. Factual training includes learning from books, lectures, and area briefings. It helps individuals gain knowledge about specific cultures, cultural dimensions, and cultural processes. Analytical training can include films, culture assimilators, and sensitivity training. It provides both general and specific culture knowledge as well as the opportunity to practice mindfulness. Experience-based training includes simulations, field trips, and role-playing. It provides opportunities to practice both mindfulness and behavioral skills. The individual also experiences the emotions of a cross-cultural interaction. Of the three methods, experience-based training is the most effective in developing a high level of cultural intelligence. However, formal experience-based training is rare, difficult, and usually expensive. Although training is an important tool to increase cultural

intelligence, the best tool is learning from actual experience. Therefore, one must really rely on day-to-day interactions with culturally different people which include some previously mentioned activities: cross-cultural interactions at home, overseas experience and expatriate assignments, and cross-cultural groups and teams (Thomas and Inkson 2004).

Cross-cultural interactions at home occur every day in multicultural societies which can present numerous opportunities to engage with other people who are culturally different. Usually however, these interactions are somewhat superficial and they lack the intensity of interpersonal interactions required for experience-based learning. To develop significant cultural intelligence requires that individuals move outside their comfort zones. One must feel culturally uncomfortable in the situation, so going to a Chinese restaurant for dinner does not qualify.

There are some ways to engage in more intense cross-cultural experiences at home including:

- Attend a wedding or religious service of someone from a different culture and ask a member of that culture to explain the significance of the rituals observed.
- Find an ethnic organization in the community and if possible participate in a cultural celebration. Have members of the organization explain the significance of the celebration and the symbolism behind the activities.
- Locate an interest group that holds a different set of beliefs and attend one of their meetings. For example a heterosexual individual might attend a meeting at a gay and lesbian association.

Overseas experience and expatriate assignments can be the most challenging situations because the individual must confront cultural differences during a temporary period of living and working in a foreign country. An individual gains cross-cultural experiences through frequent international situations that will increase cultural intelligence through necessity. This is perhaps

the best opportunity for intense experience-based learning. The immersion into a new culture can result in high stress levels until the individual adjusts, especially if an individual has had very little cross-cultural training or experience. It is important for individuals to exhibit integrity and openness, but hardiness may determine the extent that an individual stays on an overseas assignment and develops higher cultural intelligence (Thomas and Inkson 2004).

Cross-cultural groups and teams offer an opportunity for an individual to gain cultural intelligence without leaving a home country. In a cross-cultural team one can observe the behavior of culturally different individuals in the same context. For instance, a group member can observe how each of the various cultures in the group respond to group role assignments, establishing a leader, the imposition of deadlines and all the other activities and processes that occur in groups. An individual practicing mindfulness can mentally catalog all the different reactions of group behaviors, even though group interactions can be complex. However, the complexity generates great learning opportunities. The diversity of the group members is not a threat, but an opportunity to observe role models and develop greater cultural intelligence (Thomas and Inkson 2004).

The activities discussed thus far provide guidelines for developing cultural intelligence. There are several “rules of engagement” that an individual can keep in mind when interacting with others who are culturally different as suggested by Thomas and Inkson (2004). These are:

- Honestly know the home culture and background including its biases and idiosyncrasies so that there is awareness of effected perceptions and behaviors.
- Expect differences in others and deliberately avoid mindlessness. Try to see different behavior as interesting and suspend evaluation and judgment.

- Turn on mindfulness mode and pay attention to behavioral cues, their possible interpretations, and effects on behavior.
- Adapt behavior in comfortable ways that are believed appropriate for the situation.
- Be aware of the responses to behavioral adaptation.
- Experiment with different methods of adapting intuitively to new situations to increase comfort level with acquiring new behaviors.
- Practice new behaviors until producing those new behaviors is automatic and natural.

Understanding the nature of cultural intelligence and how to cultivate it are important lessons for an individual to learn, especially in the globalized work environment. Different business organizational types have emerged that range from international to transnational organizations, but all these organizational types require strong cross-national interdependence which usually results in the formation of multicultural teams (MCTs) layered within the organization. There are diverse cultural identities for each member of an MCT which impacts the member's understanding, interpretation, and response to various situations. Operating in the global multinational context means that each member is expected to develop some shared common meanings, values, and behavioral codes so that there is effective communication and coordination between members to achieve organizational goals (Ang and Van Dyne 2008).

Geert Hofstede, a noted social scientist, has defined culture as consisting of “shared mental programs that condition individual's responses to their environment” (Thomas and Inkson 2005). This definition can be understood to mean that we “see” culture in everyday behavior, so behavior may be expressed at the surface, but it is influenced by deeply embedded

mental programs that reflect one's values, attitudes, and principles. Given these deep mental programs for each member of an MCT, global identity and cultural intelligence are two concepts that create social cohesiveness that connect group members so that they go beyond their national cultures. Global identity and cultural intelligence can contribute to a team's performance by enabling employees to develop shared common meanings, values, and behavioral codes in order to communicate more effectively with each other and to coordinate their activities (Ang and Van Dyne, 2008).

Global identity is defined as a member's sense of belonging to groups that are nested within the global work environment of multinational organizations. The global identity for a member includes expectations that are associated with the working roles within the group. An individual's self-identity is composed of the personal and social selves. The personal self contains notions about an individual's own attitudes, traits, feelings, and behaviors. The social self contains identification with affiliations and group memberships. Working in the global work environment extends an individual's self-identity to include an identity that is related to group membership and adds new meaning like being "a member of multicultural team Y" or "a world traveler" (Ang and Van Dyne, 2008).

An individual's global identity and cultural intelligence are enhanced when working as part of an MCT. Studies have shown that an individual's level of cultural intelligence increase over time and that global identity also increases over time. The results of these studies suggest that exposure to the global work environment and multicultural experiences shapes cultural intelligence and global identity through the social learning process. The social learning process provides an opportunity to form a shared-meaning system of understanding and the ability to overcome cultural differences. The relationship between cultural intelligence and global identity

is reciprocal. An individual with high cultural intelligence is more likely to develop a global identity while working in an MCT. Reciprocally, an individual with a strong global identity is more likely to develop cultural intelligence while working in an MCT (Ang and Van Dyne, 2008).

Enhanced global identity and cultural intelligence are important to multinational organizations because of many factors that help the organization to achieve its business goals. Organizations are better able to sustain a competitive advantage in the global marketplace by leveraging employee diversity. MCTs pool global talent by bringing together specialized skills that are possessed by experts in different locations. MCTs can be rearranged and reassigned to respond to changing global markets to meet the dynamic task requirements of the highly turbulent global business environment (Ang and Van Dyne, 2008). The business organization gains a greater ability to meet customer needs, a more contented and effective workforce, a public relations advantage, and better teamwork (Berryman-Fink 1996). Developing cultural intelligence and global identity is a good business practice.

Even the Pentagon has recognized the benefits gained by increasing cultural intelligence. The Defense Department is developing a new training program to teach military members and civilians to be more culturally competent and aware. The officials view cross-cultural competence as important to improve their effectiveness by being better able to listen to people from other cultures and pay attention to how they see their problems instead of focusing on a Western perspective. In addition, the U.S. population is becoming increasingly diverse, so it is useful for military members to better understand their comrades by being more culturally aware (Agency Group 2009).

In conclusion, cultural intelligence in globalized work environments is an important skill set for individual workers enabling diverse business organizations to achieve their goals by being more responsive to the global marketplace. The conceptual models of cultural intelligence presented provide similar views of the attributes needed for people to thrive in culturally diverse settings. Earley , Ang, and Van Dyne's four-factor model, Earley and Mosakowski's best practice, and Thomas and Inkson's global management approach, can all be collectively viewed to include the components of acquired cultural knowledge, displayed motivation necessary to understand cultural differences, and appropriate verbal and nonverbal behaviors during multicultural interactions.

Whether an individual is working in a culturally diverse team in a home country, a multicultural team spanning multiple countries, or an overseas assignment, cultural intelligence is required to excel in business. Individuals must exhibit important attributes to progress through the five stages of developing cultural intelligence. Those attributes include suspending judgment, integrity, openness, and hardiness. Developing cultural intelligence takes time and experience to truly become confident that one can respond authentically in words and actions to different cultural situations. Understanding the nature of cultural intelligence, diagnosing one's cultural intelligence level, and proactively developing a higher level of cultural intelligence can position an individual to succeed in a globalized work environment and support an organization's overall business goals. Truly the mind, body, and heart must be engaged to achieve high cultural intelligence as a best practice.

## References

- Agency Group. (2009). "Pentagon Officials Plan Cultural Awareness Training". *FDCH Regulatory Intelligence Database*. August 12.
- Ang, Soon and Van Dyne, Linn (2008). *Handbook of Cultural Intelligence*. 1st ed. M.E. Sharpe. Armonk.
- Berryman-Fink, Cynthia (1996). *Manager's Desk Reference*. AMACOM, American Management Association. New York.
- Earley, P., and Mosakowski, E. (2004). Cultural Intelligence. *Harvard Business Review*, 82(10). October. pp. 139-146.
- Madhok, A.. (2009). "Why is the Russian guy stepping on my toes?" *Canadian HR Reporter*, 22(14). August. pp. 23.
- Thomas, David C. and Inkson, Kerr. (2005). "Cultural Intelligence People Skills for a Global Workforce". *Consulting to Management*, 16(1). March. pp. 5-9.
- Thomas, David C. and Inkson, Kerr. (2004). *Cultural Intelligence People Skills for Global Business*. Berrett-Koehler. New York.
- Triandis, Harry C. (2006). "Cultural Intelligence in Organizations". *Group & Organization Management*, 31(1). February. pp. 20-26.

## Appendix A

### Diagnosing Your Cultural Intelligence Earley and Mosakowski (2004)

These statements reflect different facets of cultural intelligence. For each set, add up your scores and divide by four to produce an average. Research with large groups of managers shows that for purposes of your own development, it is most useful to think about your three scores in comparison to one another. Generally, an average of less than 3 would indicate an area calling for improvement, while an average of great than 4.5 reflects a true CQ strength.

Rate the extent to which you agree with each statement using the scale:  
1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree

_____	Before I interact with people from a new culture, I ask myself what I hope to achieve.
_____	If I encounter something unexpected while working in a new culture, I use this experience to figure out new ways to approach <i>other</i> cultures in the future.
_____	I plan how I'm going to relate to people from a different culture before I meet them.
<b>+</b> _____	When I come into a new cultural situation, I can immediately sense whether something is going well or something is wrong.
<b>Total</b> _____ $\div 4 =$ <input type="text"/>	<b>Cognitive CQ</b>
_____	It's easy for me to change my body language (for example, eye contact or posture) to suit people from a different culture.
_____	I can alter my expression when a cultural encounter requires it.
_____	I modify my speech style (for example, accent or tone) to suit people from a different culture.
<b>+</b> _____	I easily change the way I act when a cross-cultural encounter seems to require it.
<b>Total</b> _____ $\div 4 =$ <input type="text"/>	<b>Physical CQ</b>
_____	I have confidence that I can deal well with people from a different culture.
_____	I am certain that I can befriend people whose cultural backgrounds are different from mine.
_____	I can adapt to the lifestyle of a different culture with relative ease.
<b>+</b> _____	I am confident that I can deal with a cultural situation that's unfamiliar.
<b>Total</b> _____ $\div 4 =$ <input type="text"/>	<b>Emotional/ motivational CQ</b>

## Appendix B

### Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS) - Self-Report Ang and Van Dyne (2008)

Read each statement and select the response that best describes your capabilities. Select the answer that BEST describes you AS YOU REALLY ARE (1 = strongly disagree: 7 = strongly agree).

#### The 20-item four factor CQS (the CQ Scale)

		Strongly DISAGREE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly AGREE
<b>CQ-Strategy:</b>										
MC1	I am conscious of the cultural knowledge I use when interacting with people with different cultural backgrounds.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
MC2	I adjust my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from a culture that is unfamiliar to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
MC3	I am conscious of the cultural knowledge I apply to cross-cultural interactions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
MC4	I check the accuracy of my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from different cultures.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
<b>CQ-Knowledge:</b>										
COG1	I know the legal and economic systems of other cultures.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
COG2	I know the rules (e.g., vocabulary, grammar) of other languages.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
COG3	I know the cultural values and religious beliefs of other cultures.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
COG4	I know the marriage systems of other cultures.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
COG5	I know the arts and crafts of other cultures.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
COG6	I know the rules for expressing non-verbal behaviors in other cultures.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
<b>CQ-Motivation:</b>										
MOT1	I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
MOT2	I am confident that I can socialize with locals in a culture that is unfamiliar to me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
MOT3	I am sure I can deal with the stresses of adjusting to a culture that is new to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
MOT4	I enjoy living in cultures that are unfamiliar to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
MOT5	I am confident that I can get used to the shopping conditions in a different culture.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
<b>CQ-Behavior:</b>										
BEH1	I change my verbal behavior (e.g., accent, tone) when a cross-cultural interaction requires it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
BEH2	I use pause and silence differently to suit different cross-cultural situations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
BEH3	I vary the rate of my speaking when a cross-cultural situation requires it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
BEH4	I change my non-verbal behavior when a cross-cultural situation requires it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
BEH5	I alter my facial expressions when a cross-cultural interaction requires it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		

Copyright © Cultural Intelligence Center 2005. Used by permission of the Cultural Intelligence Center. All rights reserved.

Note: Use of this scale is granted to academic researchers for research purposes only. For information on using the scale for purposes other than academic research (e.g., consultants and non-academic organizations), please send an email to [cquery@culturalq.com](mailto:cquery@culturalq.com).

For additional information, see Ang, S., Van Dyne, L., Koh, C.S.K., & Ng, K.Y. (2004) The Measurement of Cultural Intelligence. Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management, New Orleans.