

Culture Confusion

One main barrier to understanding culture is the word itself. The culture concept is thrown around all over the place. It's used to describe everything from fashion to fascism. Because of the countless ways people talk about culture in popular media, we find it helpful to begin by discussing what we mean by culture. Later, we will critique two popular uses of the term that negatively influence our perceptions of others. Then we'll dissect the most current academic, research-based approaches to the culture concept. Again, just as myth and gut feeling never helped humanity in the medical field, neither will ungrounded approaches help us discover solutions to real-life relationship challenges.



REFLECT

How do you define culture?

In what areas of your life do you engage people from different cultures?

In what ways do you think culture impacts communication?

Cultural Intelligence (CQ)

Cultural intelligence is a person's capability to function effectively across national, ethnic and organizational cultures.

As opposed to memorizing lists of cultural do's and don'ts, CQ provides an overall model for thinking. Merely teaching cultural practices and taboos aren't sufficient. Cultural possibilities are endless, so learning each culture is impossible. CQ, on the other hand, can be applied to countless cross-cultural contexts. It discovers and refines tools for adapting to various situations. CQ is also an individual capability that can be learned by almost anyone.

CQ skills include

1. Accepting of a certain degree of cross-cultural confusion
2. Rethinking one's own assumptions
3. Suspending judgment about cultural values
4. Desiring to understand cultural differences
5. Adapting to and shaping the cultural aspects of our environment

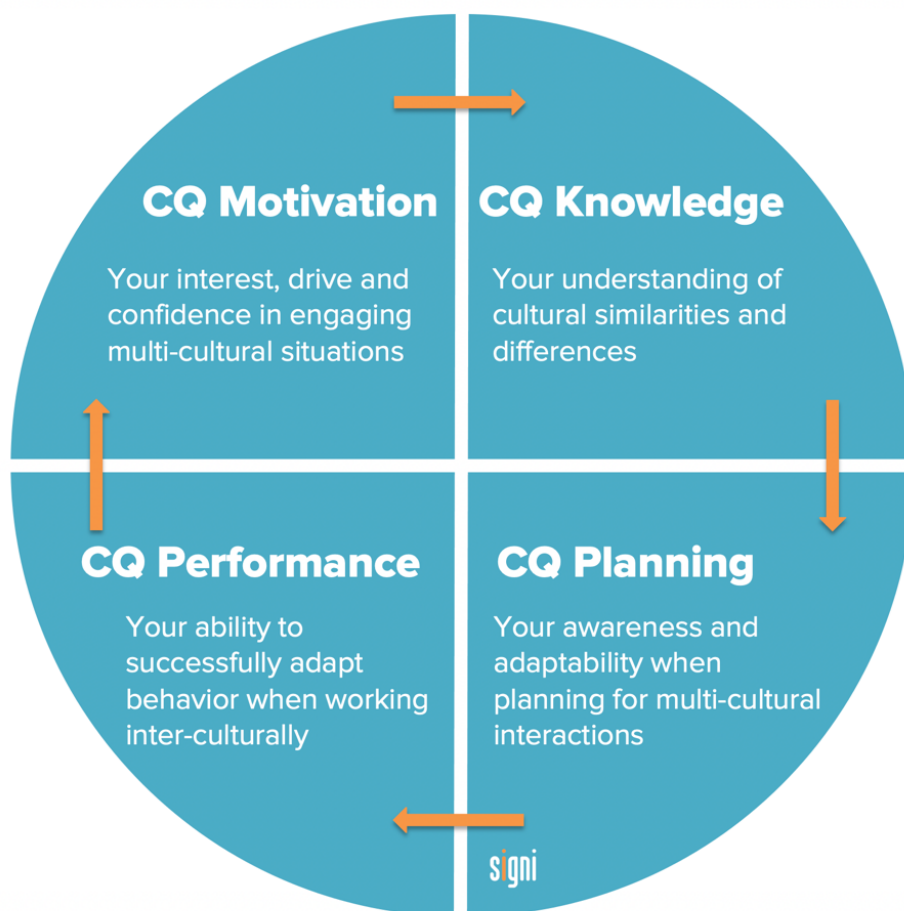
Similar to IQ & EQ

Much like IQ and Emotional Intelligence (EQ), CQ is a cognitive measurement. Sternberg (1997) defines intelligence as "the abilities necessary to select, shape, and adapt to an environment." However, whereas general intelligence focuses on academic skills and emotional intelligence reflects the capability to interact and work with other people, CQ involves the ability to relate well with people who are culturally different. This makes CQ a unique form of intelligence.

Research Based

CQ is a theoretical framework rooted in extensive academic research. It is based on multiple intelligences research. CQ is much more than mere knowledge or personality traits. It emphasizes dynamic social capabilities. CQ is not culturally specific either. It can be applied across many diverse contexts. People from every culture can perform high or low on the CQ scale. Research shows that CQ has many benefits for individuals and organizations, including job performance, global leadership effectiveness and intercultural negotiation effectiveness. Many organizations invest in cultural intelligence because it is proven to increase global expansion, competitive advantage and company profits.

The Four CQ Capabilities



Motivation

What is your motivation for this assignment?

Knowledge

What cultural information is needed to fulfill this task?

Planning

What is your plan for this initiative?

Performance

What behaviors do you need to adapt to do this effectively?

The CQ Scale

The measurement of CQ is based on worldwide norms. It can be used to assess individuals you're considering for a cross-cultural assignment. The four components can also be applicable to diversity training or for a leader's personal development plan. And the four dimensions can be used as a four-step cycle for developing cultural intelligence both over the long haul and in case-by-case situations. As the cycle repeats itself, our overall cultural intelligence has the potential to keep developing and growing. Cultural intelligence is a transformative model of cross-cultural behavior and leadership development rather than a model built primarily on behavior modification strategies.



The Business Case

We cannot do business as usual wherever we go. Cultural chasms are too wide, and there are no one-size-fits-all solutions in a global interaction. So, in order to successfully adjust, cultural intelligence helps us:

- Understand a diversifying customer base
- Manage diverse and cross-border teams
- Recruit and develop cross-cultural talent
- adapt to various leadership styles
- Demonstrate genuine respect for all kinds of people

NOTES

The Stats

35%

Companies in the top quartile of racial, ethnic, and gender diversity were **35%** more likely to earn financial returns above the industry median.

McKinsey & Company

92%

92% of companies surveyed across 38 countries attributed increase in revenue to cultural intelligence training.

CEO Magazine 2016

42%

42% of overseas assignments are judged to be failures by senior executives.

Right Management 2013

90%

90% of senior executives surveyed across 68 countries see cross-cultural leadership as the biggest challenge of this century.

Economist Intelligence Unit

70%

Organizations with inclusive leaders are **70%** more likely to capture a new market and **45%** more likely to grow in market share.

Center for Talent Innovation

If commitment to achieving diversity is not perceived as genuine it will have a negative effect.

Enchautegui-Jesús et al., 2006

Why Culture Matters

Best Practices

- Company culture is shown to have profound effects on the ethics of its employees (Sims & Brinkmann, 2003; Enron Ethics: Culture Matters More than Codes).
- Cultural competence increases trust and organizational viability, just as it increases the ability to form new associations and networks of trusting relationships to accomplish business transactions (Shockley-Zalabak & Ellis 200; Organizational Trust: What it Means and Why It Matters).
- National culture has been shown to impact major business activities, from capital structure (Chui et al., 2002) to group performance (Leung et al., 2003; Culture and international business: recent advances and their implications for future research).
- The transfer or diffusion of organizational knowledge is not easy to accomplish across cultural boundaries (Bhagat et al., 2002).

Common sense wasn't enough. The blunders

- Coca-Cola's brand name, when first marketed in China, was sometimes translated as "Bite The Wax Tadpole."
- Mercedes-Benz entered the Chinese market under the brand name "Bensi," which means "rush to die."
- Nike had to recall thousands of products when a decoration intended to resemble fire on the back of the shoes resembled the Arabic word for Allah.
- Gerber marketed baby food in Africa with a cute baby on the label without knowing that, in Ethiopia, for example, products usually have pictures on the label of what's inside since many consumers can't read.

NOTES

The Job Applicant

Cultural Intelligence Practice

In California, the human resource manager of a manufacturing company sits in his office. He is interviewing candidates for factory work, and the next candidate is due. Suddenly the door opens, and a dark-skinned young man walks in. Without looking at the manager, the candidate finds the nearest chair, and, without waiting to be invited, he sits in it. He makes no eye contact with the manager but instead stares at the floor. The manager is appalled at such graceless behavior. The interview has not even started, and even though the jobs being filled do not require strong social skills, it is already unlikely that the young man will not be appointed.

Questions:

1. What caused the human resource manager to think negatively of the applicant?
2. How do think the manager expected the candidate to act?
3. How might the manager have misinterpreted the applicant's behavior?
4. How might cultural intelligence on the part of the manager and the applicant have led to a very different scenario?

CQ Motivation



CQ Motivation is your willingness to work with diverse others. People with high motivational CQ have an intrinsic interest in cross-cultural situations and are confident in their personal cross-cultural effectiveness. It also involves one's ability to overcome explicit and unconscious bias. People with high CQ motivation persist in interactions that are challenging, even when they feel confused, frustrated, or burnt out. Your CQ Motivation reflects your degree of enjoyment in dealing across cultures, your perception of the material benefits that flow from those interactions, and your self-confidence in novel cultural settings.

Do I enjoy interacting with diverse others?

The main threats to your CQ Motivation are stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination. Stereotypes refer to beliefs that certain attributes, characteristics, and behaviors are typical of members of a particular group of people. Prejudice refers to feelings and attitudes towards a group and its members. Discrimination involves differential treatment of members of a particular group. Research shows that we all harbor unconscious bias; even if we outwardly adhere to strong egalitarian values. Bias can negatively impact your interest in engaging with diverse others. But the good news is that with awareness, training, and effort, you can overcome unconscious bias.

What material benefits will I gain from engaging with other diverse people?

Tangible rewards can increase your willingness to work with diverse others. For example, the positive implications for your career advancement or business performance. But material gains alone are unlikely to counter unconscious bias.

CQ Knowledge

CQ Knowledge is your understanding of culture and cultural differences. Members of a social group develop similarities in their thoughts and behaviors as they interact with one another. CQ knowledge begins with an understanding of how culture shapes us, others, and the perceptions we have of one another. Shared patterns reflect what is required for acceptance and success in a given social setting. Different cultural groups develop distinct sets of shared beliefs and customs.



Obvious cultural variations include language, customs, and appearance. But similarities in cultural displays may mask more fundamental differences. Core cultural differences are invisible, but they cause the most problems and are often overlooked. Hidden cultural differences include values, assumptions, and beliefs. Your CQ Knowledge includes your understanding of broad cultural differences and cultural variations relevant to a particular setting.

Do I understand broad cultural differences?

Cultural values represent a group's collective agreement on how best to organize itself to ensure its social and physical survival. Examples include the division of gender roles, the legitimacy of power, the relative importance of group welfare over the needs of the individual. Cultural norms and values refer to the varying ways cultures approach issues such as time, authority, and relationships. Value differences drive variations in tangible cultural differences including language, customs, technology, and institutions.

Why do I need to learn about broad cultural differences?

Today's leaders and employees work across a broad spectrum of cultural diversity, and they do this daily. It is difficult, if not impossible, to predict and prepare for every exchange. Learning the core set of values on which cultures vary is a more efficient method of understanding cultural differences than memorizing long lists of context-specific dos and don'ts. Seeing the world in light of our own cultural background and experience is inevitable. However, ignoring the impact of ethnocentrism on how we lead is the single greatest obstacle to CQ knowledge.

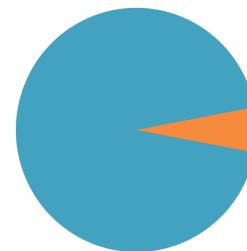
Example: "One U.S. business opened its Thailand office one flight above a Buddha statue. Only after several months of virtually no business did it learn that no one was coming to the office because the business violated a sacred rule: Never put yourself above Buddha, literally! After moving to a new location, business took off (Livermore, David)."

Defining Culture

1. Culture as Upper Class

This old-school idea believes that some people have culture, while others don't. Culture, here, normally refers to mannerisms and habits of the upper or dominant class.

Socially, this concept is used as a strategy for maintaining power in the dominant class. While this faulty concept is fading in popularity in many societies, unfortunately, it is still frightfully influential. This idea sees culture as a small piece of the pie. It's an add on. It doesn't recognize the value of diverse knowledge or human experience outside of its own, very limited paradigm.



Culture as Upper Class

Unconscious Bias

Ignorance of cultural variation is perpetuated by unconscious bias. Unconscious biases are social stereotypes about certain groups of people that individuals form outside their own conscious awareness. Everyone holds unconscious beliefs about various social and identity groups, and these biases stem from one's tendency to organize social worlds by categorizing. Unconscious bias is far more prevalent than conscious prejudice and often incompatible with one's conscious values. Certain scenarios can activate unconscious attitudes and beliefs. For example, biases may be more prevalent when multi-tasking or working under time pressure.

<http://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit>

Cultural Superiority

Ethnocentrism is judging another culture solely by the values and standards of one's own culture. Ethnocentric individuals judge other groups relative to their own ethnic group or culture, especially with concern for language, behavior, customs, and religion. These ethnic distinctions and subdivisions serve to define each ethnicity's unique cultural identity. Ethnocentrism may be overt or subtle, and it is considered a natural function of human psychology.

How does this cultural view impact organizations?

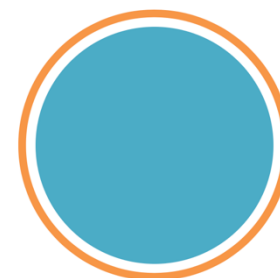
1. Rigid, overpowering organizational culture
2. Usually very top-down and heavy handed
3. It believes there is one right way, our way
4. Strong in-group out-group dynamic
5. Contributes to cultural blindness
6. Stifles motivation to engage and to learn from others
7. Inspires uninformed, often ridiculous protocols

Bottom line: Everybody has culture! And tapping into culture is much smarter than slicing it to pieces.

2. Culture as Broad Categories

Humans have a natural tendency to simplify complexity. We have to pack an overwhelming amount of experiential data into tidy packages or categories in order to make sense of life in the face of infinite possibilities. These categories give us a feeling of order and normality. They help us efficiently manage our multifaceted world.

For example, the Eskimo culture has fifty words, or categories, for snow. Americans only have a few. And the Aymara have multiple words for the verb "to carry". Language evolves within the environments that it is used to manage.



**Culture as Broad
Categories**

Why?

In the past, and often today, cultures have been viewed as homogeneous wholes. In this paradigm, nationality is usually a biggie. We say things like American culture, Mexican culture, Japanese culture, etc. Racially we'll talk about white and black culture. These kinds of categories are too broad. They miss huge, important variations between and among larger social groups.

Social groups also have the tendency to critically judge broad cultural categories against each other on a value scale. Ours being best. These scales could include developed against undeveloped, modern against behind the times, advanced against unadvanced (these are all Western categories). These habits can stifle equitable mindsets and the creation of solutions to major social problems. And these generalizing tendencies absolutely lead to **stereotypes**.

Stereotypes

A term used to define all people of a certain belief into a mostly negative category that may only reflect a selected few of the racial demographics. All people of all nationalities have been victims of being stereotyped, even those who have made most of the stereotypes of other people.

How does this cultural view impact organizations?

Too much emphasis on national, ethnic and other broad categories runs the risk of producing a superficial cultural veneer, leaving behind an unhealthy, inaccurate cultural-ish residue. A company can look multi-cultural on the outside, but the deeper identities, talents, perspectives, and qualities of employees can be suppressed.

People in non-dominant cultural groups can feel that their ethnic identity or physical racial characteristics are being used. While most people would rather that their unique cultural knowledge and experience be understood, appreciated, and collaboratively integrated.

People look different because they have different biological trajectories. Categories of race and ethnicity are socially constructed. But social categories of race are very “real” in the sense that they affect the behaviors of societies that believe them. Getting ridiculed, beat up or isolated from beneficial socio-economic opportunities because of these “genetic trajectories and ethnic/gender affiliations” is very real. But the social categories are also cultural, so they can be changed, consequently changing the negative behaviors and painful physical realities that follow.

Bottom line: Culture is much deeper and more complex than the thin veneer of stereotypes and uninformed trends.

3. Culture as Shared Meaning

Hofstede’s Definition

“The collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another.”

1. Culture is collective
2. It’s programmed in our minds
3. Culture both unites and separates



**Culture as Shared
Meaning**

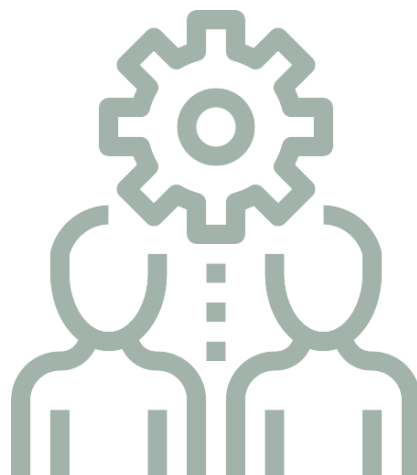
Quinn's Definition

*“People in a given group **share understandings** of the world that have been learned and internalized in the course of their **shared experience** and rely heavily on these shared understandings to comprehend and organize experience, including their thoughts, feelings, motivations and actions, and the actions of other people.”*

1. Culture groups are people who share common experiences
2. Shared experiences create and reinforce shared understandings
3. Groups interpret everything through these understandings

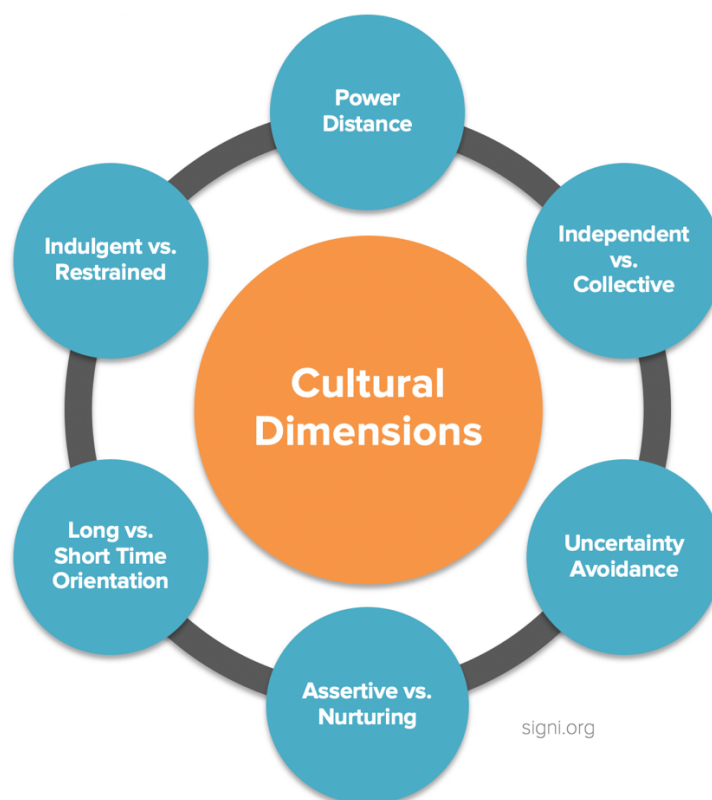
Culture is molded by...

Culture Shapes...



Cultural Value Dimensions

In intercultural leadership and relationship building, success depends on understanding the formation, influence and interplay between cultural value dimensions.



NOTES

ACHIEVEMENT vs. NURTURING (MAS)

Also known as Masculinity (Achievement) vs. Femininity (Nurturing). The Masculinity side of this dimension represents a preference in society for achievement, heroism, assertiveness, and material rewards for success. Society at large is more competitive. Its opposite, Femininity, stands for a preference for cooperation, modesty, caring for the weak and quality of life. Society at large is more consensus-oriented.

In the business context Masculinity versus Femininity is sometimes also related to as “tough versus tender” cultures.

ACHIEVEMENT	NURTURING
Ego orientation	Relationship orientation
Money & things are important	Quality of life & people are important
Emphasis on what you do	Emphasis on who you are
Stark difference in male and female roles	Male and female roles overlap
Admiration of the strong	Sympathy for the weak
Live to work	Work to live
Competitive	Cooperative

CQ Performance

CQ performance, the behavioral dimension of CQ, is a person's ability to act appropriately in a range of cross-cultural situations. The subdimensions of CQ performance are verbal actions, nonverbal actions, and speech acts, the exact words and phrases we use when we communicate specific types of messages.

Can we effectively accomplish our performance goals in different cultural situations?

A person with high CQ Planning thinks about multicultural interactions before, during and after the interaction. CQ Planning involves consciously taking the perspective of the other person during the interaction. We will always make mistakes. But mistakes for a life-long learner are steps to growth. We have to move beyond behavior modification approaches wherein we pretend to be respectful and move toward becoming leaders who genuinely respect and value people from different cultural backgrounds. One of the most common complaints from employees as they assess diversity training is that it made little difference to what actually occurred in the workplace.

How to become more culturally intelligent

Prime the pump. Most approaches to cross-cultural work focus on information about how cultures differ. But many of the greatest challenges in cross-cultural leadership have much less to do with inadequate information and far more to do with motivation. Many organizations jump into offering training about cross-cultural differences without first assessing whether employees are motivated to be more effective cross-culturally. This is one of the reasons diversity-training programs often fail. There's a direct correlation between an individual's level of motivation to adapt cross-culturally and high CQ performance.

Be honest with yourself.

Honesty also requires facing the prejudices and biases we implicitly associate with certain groups of people. It recognizes fluctuating levels of motivation, and owns negative emotions associated with cross cultural encounters or conflicts.

Examine your confidence level.

For leaders, a great deal of research supports the premise that one's level of confidence in accomplishing what he or she sets out to do will critically determine the outcome. Without a strong sense of self-efficacy, a leader will avoid challenges and give up easily when confronted with setbacks. Our sense of confidence for particular tasks varies based on the situation and context.

Eat and socialize.

Anthony Bourdain observed that food is everything we are. He went on to say that “food’s an extension of nationalist feeling, ethnic feeling, your personal history, your province, your region, your tribe, your grandma. It’s inseparable from those from the get-go.”

If you want to grow CQ then experience culture and deeper friendships through food and good conversation. You’ll be amazed at how much you can learn about someone when you share a meal with them. Enjoy the differences and share your life and customs with them as well.

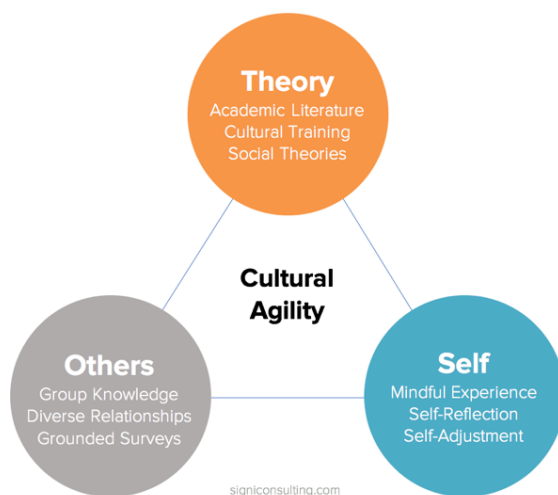
Count the perks.

- Deeper, more meaningful relationships
- Career Advancement
- Creativity and Innovation
- Expansion of Global Networks
- Salary and Profit

Calculate the personal, organizational, and global cost of not prioritizing cultural intelligence.

Failing in the area of culture will be devastating for any organization that hopes to succeed in our already globalized world economy. The great thing is that failing at culture does not have to be an option given the great strides taken in cultural intelligence.

Keep balance with the Cultural Agility Triad™



Live for something **bigger!**



Signi® is grateful for the contributions of Ang Soon, Linn Van Dyne, David Thomas, Kerr Inkson and David Livermore for their investment in cultural intelligence theory and framework development, and for the late Geert Hofstede for his exceptional contribution to cultural dimensions theory.

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signi.org
connect@signiconsulting.com