

## **Cultural Intelligence In plain English**

What it is, why you need it, how to get some.

Terry Erle Clayton

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Published by Red Plough International Co. Ltd.  
Udon Thani, Thailand

## Prologue

There is a saying, if you can't find the book you want to read you have to write it. So I did. Living and working in and with so many cultures, I was always on the look out for insights that would help me communicate more effectively, negotiate better deals, and understand my own reactions to people and situations. All I could find was 'cross-cultural communication' and I have a shelf full of books that did little to satisfy me. For the most part, they conflate 'culture' and 'nation' to mean the same thing, so you get titles like "doing business with the Chinese" or "guide to living with the [insert nation here]". Most are filled with amusing or cautionary anecdotes and lists of dos and don'ts, as if all the millions of people in any one nation are all alike.

To the casual traveler, it often seems that way. The Dutch are direct, the English reserved, the Thais smiling and friendly. Once you put down roots outside your home country or start working in other countries, you soon begin to see that any nation state is a multicultural patchwork and simplistic prescriptions are just not useful. There are more in-depth and thoughtful explorations of culture, but they tend to be academic and aimed at people doing business. What I could not find was a book like this; something written in plain English that would give curious people a general framework for understanding all the complexity of culture with general 'rules of thumb' for navigating cultures near and far, high and low. I hope this is it.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

The term 'cultural intelligence' is starting to pop up everywhere. There are websites and books and magazine articles and training courses, workshops, conferences, tests, experts, and consultants; all telling us how important, how essential it is we develop our cultural intelligence, and how they can help us do just that. For a price. The usual reasons given have to do with our increasingly connected world and doing business in a globalized community.

Good reasons, but do I need to develop my cultural intelligence? Can I develop an intelligence. Isn't intelligence fixed, like my IQ?

Yes, yes and no.

Yes, whatever your age or occupation, wherever you live, developing or enhancing your knowledge of what culture is and how it works and becoming more self-aware of how you interact with people of other cultures will have day-to-day practical applications.

Yes, you can develop or enhance an intelligence, and 'no', intelligence is not fixed, at least not as in a fixed score on the good old Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scales and similar IQ tests.

For most of us, our first exposure to new developments in science, technology and business practices is the popular media. The media generally does a great job of informing us of a new development or discovery. But they do tend to simplify the content and exaggerate some features and speculate in somewhat grand terms.

For example, just a few months before I started writing this book, Google's AlphaGo artificial intelligence program won four out of four matches against the world's leading Go player, South Korean Lee Se-dol. For weeks afterwards, the media was full of articles about how AI will put us all out of work and take over the world. Or won't. It's a hot debate right now, which is why in the weeks following Google's announcement, people were jumping on the band wagon to further their own goals.

Researchers at universities and private companies are using AlphaGo's win to justify the need for more funding for AI research and applications. Deloitte University Press is one of many institutions offering courses on cognitive technologies: "The real opportunities for business". And Qualcomm and IBM are two of the more well-known companies pitching 'cognitive technologies' as business solutions.

Cultural intelligence is a bandwagon for some folks as well. If you are not already, you soon will be receiving more pitches to buy the book, attend the seminar, sign up for the training course, and hire the consultants.

So the question is, "Should I?"

Should I buy the book?

Which of the several rather expensive books should I buy?

Should my company hire this merry band of consultant/trainers to give us the cultural intelligence advantage?

Should we send our staff to this big conference on cultural intelligence?

Who should go?

How will this affect our bottom line?

Is this a real thing, or just the latest management fad?

My goal is to help you answer these and similar questions. I will not promise to answer these questions for you, but I can promise you will be better able to assess the claims people make about cultural intelligence.

Here's how I plan to do that.

First, we are going to look at the 'bare bones' of cultural intelligence. At the next reception or network mingle, this is what you need when someone starts throwing around buzz terms like 'CQ' or raving about the importance of cultural intelligence, or trying to sell you a training program.

Then we are going to talk about culture.

One thing I have noticed about all the books and courses and training programs I have seen, they don't really say much about what culture is or how it works. They tend to equate 'culture' with 'nation', as in Japanese culture or American culture. Culture, as we will see, is more like an onion, with national culture just the skin on the outside.

Next, we're going to look at the notion of 'intelligence', or as we say now, 'intelligences' with an 's'. Eight of them if you follow Howard Gardner, who first proposed the idea in his 1983 book "Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences". I am going to argue that this term 'cultural intelligence' is a helpful shorthand for the use of our multiple intelligences.

With a bit of background on culture and intelligence, we are ready to tackle this idea of cultural intelligence in a bit more depth; what it is, where it came from, why it is suddenly so popular, and how you can use it to your advantage.

Before I begin, I want to make it clear I like the idea of cultural intelligence. I like the concept. Up until now, the discourse has been dominated by ideas about 'cross-cultural communication'. The aim is similar, but I find cross-cultural communication too simplistic and, frankly, not all that useful. Too often 'culture' is taken to mean 'national culture' and all the people of a nation are represented as a homogenous group. The Chinese don't show emotion. Germans are punctual. Most of the content in these books is amusing or cautionary anecdotes and lists of dos and don'ts about surface features of culture.

Cultural intelligence, on the other hand, recognizes the complexity of culture and says we have to figure out the dos and don'ts ourselves, but gives us some big clues how to do that. I like that it emphasizes an awareness of our own culture as a starting point. There are also some reliable measures and a growing body of academic research to back it up.

The concept of cultural intelligence is relatively new so there is a lot of hype and hoopla and there is some danger it could end up as just another management fad. I am hoping it matures beyond that. One cycle of the evening news is enough to convince anyone our world is becoming more volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. People are pulling back into insular identities based on nation, race and religion and "the other" is an easy target to blame for all our social and economic problems. History clearly illustrates the futility of building walls; physical walls, legal walls, moral, social and political walls.

Think about it: the only walls left standing from the past are now tourist attractions. What we need is more tolerance for diversity. If the idea of cultural intelligence can help us foster that tolerance in the boardroom, in the workplace, or on the school playground, I am all for it.

## Chapter 2: Cultural intelligence: The bare bones

Main points in this chapter:

1. Cultural intelligence is the capacity to work effectively across cultures.
2. Cultural intelligence is comprised of four elements; motivation, knowledge, strategy, and action.
3. Cultural intelligence can be measured if the measurement tool is reliable and valid.

A simple idea

Never underestimate the power of a simple idea. Henry Ford's assembly line was a simple idea. Putting a camera in a mobile phone was a simple idea. Cultural intelligence is a simple idea, which is partly why it has the potential to be so useful.

In its simplest form, you can say you have cultural intelligence if you have the capacity to work effectively across cultures. For now, let's define 'effective' as 'getting the results you hoped for'. 'Capacity' is made up of four factors:

- motivation
- knowledge
- strategy
- action

Motivation means, "How interested are you in working with people from another culture?" If you are a teacher, nurse, or law enforcement officer working in a multi-ethnic neighborhood, you might be highly motivated. If you plan to study or work in another country, or in another part of your country, you might be highly motivated. If in your place of work there are people from different ethnic groups or social classes you might be highly motivated.

Or not.

As it turns out, a lack of motivation to understand other cultures is often the underlying cause of conflict in a community or work environment.

Knowledge is knowledge of facts. What do you know about the history, geography, climate, religion, art, music, literature and language of a culture, or cultures you want to work with?

Strategy gets a little more complicated. Let's suppose you are an older white male Caucasian businessman and you are going to open a branch office in New Delhi. Let us further suppose in your search for knowledge you have gone beyond the Wikipedia page, a few Bollywood movies, and Lonely Planet. How will you actually use your knowledge to make a good first impression and manage a team of well-educated Sikhs who, you soon discover, despised their previous boss?

You can break strategy down into three parts which helps. One is awareness or 'knowing what you know' about your own and another culture. This includes knowing what you don't know.

Two is planning, which is thinking about how you will perform in a situation before you actually get there. For example, before you arrive at a colleague's house for dinner, you could ask him, "Is it appropriate to bring a bottle of wine? Should I take off my shoes at the door? Am I expected to eat with my hands or will there be cutlery?"

Finally, there is checking assumptions and adjusting mental maps when experience differs from expectations. "Ah yes. I assumed a shoulder hug would indicate I was pleased with her performance but actually I embarrassed her beyond words so won't do that again."

Which brings us to the forth factor: action. This is your ability to adapt your verbal and nonverbal behavior to suit a variety of situations. Learning to use the wai as a greeting in Thailand is easy, at least at the beginning. Tuning your ear to the cadence of South Asian English takes a bit of time, and getting comfortable holding hands with your male counterpart as you stroll from the restaurant to the parking lot can take some getting used to.

There you have the bare bones of cultural intelligence or CQ as those in the know will say. It looks easy but it is deceptively simple as you will see when we start looking at culture. But first, a word about measurement.

Measuring your CQ

"If you can't measure it, you can't improve it." So said Lord Kelvin, a British mathematical physicist and engineer, and inventor of the Kelvin temperature scale used in physics and chemistry.

Measurement certainly lends credibility to whatever it is we are doing. If I say I can increase your productivity by improving your writing skills, I am making a claim. You may be skeptical. If I say I can increase your productivity by ten to fifteen percent by improving your writing skills, my claim sounds stronger, more believable, and possibly more interesting because of the promise of a measure.

A good measure or test has two elements: reliability and validity.

A test is reliable if it gives consistent results. If I measure the length and width of my office today and find it is 5 meters by 4 meters, and I measure it again tomorrow and find it is 6 meters by 5 meters, either my office has mysteriously expanded or there is something wrong with my tape measure. My measure, or my method of measuring, is not reliable because I don't get the same results with the same measuring instrument.

Validity is how well a test measures what it was designed to measure. For example, if an exam question on a geography test is written with complicated, hard to understand wording, it isn't valid because it is partly measuring reading comprehension. The test question is not a valid measure of my knowledge of geography.

A good test has to be both reliable and valid. For example, if your bathroom scale is off by one kilogram, it reads your weight and adds one kilogram. The scale is reliable because it consistently adds the one kilogram, no more, no less, but it is not valid because your true weight is less than what the scale reads.

Is there a test of cultural intelligence and is it reliable and valid?

There are several actually, and no doubt more to come. There is a website called [Commonpurpose.org](http://Commonpurpose.org) that offers a twelve-item "often, sometimes, never" scale and will tell you if your CQ is high, medium or low. I could not find any information on how the test was constructed or anything about its reliability or validity. Without that information I would hesitate to use this test for anything other than a bit of fun.

Another company called Global Dynamics also has a twelve-item scale, this one multiple choice. The questions seem to be measuring only the knowledge factor of cultural intelligence. For example, question six asks, "How many days of vacation are mandatory by law for full time employees in the United States?" Again, no information on reliability or validity. And I have to wonder how many Americans know the answer to that question.

When you are getting pitched to pay for testing, one of your questions should be: "What evidence do you have your test is reliable and valid?" If the person pitching can't cite academic research papers published in international peer reviewed journals, chances are their test is neither.

In contrast, Earley, Soon Ang, Van Dyne, Livermore and their colleagues have invested considerable time and effort in scientifically sound research on reliability and validity for their 20-item Cultural Intelligence Scale.

In their Handbook of Cultural Intelligence published in 2008 and again in 2015, Soon Ang and Lynn Van Dyne have collected studies done by a score of researchers. This is available online as a PDF file and well worth browsing if you want to learn more about how the test was constructed and tested for reliability and validity. In chapter two, you will find a version of the test items and you can do an informal test on yourself. For example, here are three of the test items for the behavioral or action factor:

Item 1. I change my verbal behavior (e.g. accent, tone) when a cross-cultural interaction requires it.

This does not mean I try to imitate someone's accent. That would be offensive or embarrassing or possibly funny, but seldom appropriate. What it might mean is I don't use the rising tone at the end of a declarative sentence to indicate a question, for example, "It's too warm in here?" Another North American would understand what I was doing, but someone from an Asian culture would probably miss it entirely, so I won't use it.

Item 2. I use pause and use silence differently to suit different cross-cultural situations.

North American's make extensive use of what linguists call the 'filled pause', otherwise known as idle chatter, shooting the breeze, or killing time, because generally we are not comfortable with silence in a conversation. Most Asian cultures are much more comfortable with silence and find idle banter pointless and annoying.

Item 3. I alter my facial expressions when a cross-cultural interaction requires it.

Thailand has been promoted as "the land of smiles" but within Thai culture smiling is a form of subtle interpersonal messaging. There are Thai terms for as many as thirteen different kinds of smiles, for example:

- \* Yim thak thaai: The polite smile for someone you barely know,
- \* Fuen Yim: The stiff smile, also known as the "I should laugh at the joke even though it's not funny" smile, and
- \* Yim sao: The sad smile.

The point being, just because someone is smiling doesn't mean they are happy to see you, and your sparkling grin may be sending the wrong message.

## Chapter 3: Culture

Main points in this chapter:

1. How culture is a way of viewing the world.
2. National culture is just one of many kinds of culture.
3. There are 'big' cultures and 'little' cultures.
4. We all belong to more than one culture at the same time.
5. Language is a good indicator of culture and a window into culture.
6. There are cultural universals we all share.
7. Cultures are not fixed or static. Cultures shape us but we also shape culture.

### What is culture?

The first thing most people think of when you say 'culture' is 'national culture', as in American or Japanese or British or Thai culture. National culture is most often expressed in terms of dress, gesture, language, food and iconic symbols. For example, cowboys, Hollywood, Coca Cola and the Statue of Liberty are iconic symbols of American culture.

What culture do you think of when you hear these iconic symbols?

- \* Eiffel Tower and escargot
- \* Mount Fuji and sushi
- \* The Vatican and pasta

That was pretty easy, France, Japan and Italy. For most educated people in most parts of the world, constant exposure through photos, travel posters, films, TV programs and books have made these places and food items easily recognizable symbols of a national culture.

Here is something a little more challenging. In what culture do women wear a kimono, an ao dai, a sari?

The kimono was easy, that's Japan again. The ao dai is Vietnam, and the sari India.

One more, this time looking at gestures. In what cultures do people bow and wai instead of shaking hands. In what countries do men hold their right hand over their heart as a greeting or departure?

Gestures are a little less widely known, except perhaps the bow in Japan. The wai is most common in India and Thailand, and the hand over the heart is common among Muslims in Central Asia.

Sushi, the Vatican, the sari, the wai, these are all things we identify with national cultures. There is such a thing as national culture but it is the outer skin on the onion; what we see first before we start peeling back the layers. National culture is what the Ministry of Tourism

promotes to get you on a plane to spend two weeks at a beach resort, mountain chalet, safari or vineyard tour. It's what Ministries of Culture and Ministries of the Interior promote to assimilate a wide range of tribes, clans, ethnic groups, and religious followers into a cohesive nation state. But it is not the whole picture.

## **Peeling the onion**

Nation states, the countries we see named on world maps, are a relatively new phenomenon. If you look at a map of Europe around the year 1400, you will recognize France, England and Portugal, but you will not find anything that looks like Spain, Italy, Germany or Russia. Those parts of the map are a patchwork of tiny principalities and little kingdoms, all at war with one another on and off for centuries.

Fast forward about 100 years. The more familiar shape of the Europe we know today starts emerging in the 1500s. Significant events in the 1500s included the Protestant Reformation, Henry VIII of England breaking with the Catholic Church, the reign of Queen Elizabeth the 1st, and the early phase of European exploration that led to colonization and imperialism.

Fast forward once more to the 1800s and we have a Europe that looks a lot like it does now, with only Germany left to unify. It was another hundred years, give or take, before the map of Europe looks like it does today, say after World War I. So the modern world as we see it on the map is only about 100 years old. A hundred years may seem like a long time, but to put that in perspective, there are currently an estimated 450,000 people alive today who are 100 years old or more.

What does this have to do with culture?

If we overlay the map of modern Europe onto the map of 15th Century Europe, we will find that many of the local variations in customs and norms, even attitudes and beliefs, can be traced back to the Europe of the 1400s. Take the modern German state of Bavaria, forever famous as the site of Adolf Hitler's Eagle's Nest retreat, and excellent beer and sausage of course.

Bavaria, like many modern German states, was once a separate kingdom. If you visit Bavaria today and have the good fortune to fall in with a group of locals at a pub, you will notice when someone arrives to join the group, they knock on the table a couple of times before they sit down. This custom goes back to the Middle Ages when all good Christians, in Bavaria at least, learned to knock on the table to show they were not a demon from Hell come calling to steal souls. It signals or indicates, "I have substance, I am real, not some phantom."

To the best of my knowledge, that custom is not common anywhere else in Germany today. So is knocking on the pub table part of German culture, or part of Bavarian culture? Is Bavarian culture part of German culture? Is culture like a curry or a stew then, with all sorts of things thrown into the pot? The short answer is 'yes'.

Let's take a closer look at American culture as an example.

I say "American culture" and you think Hollywood, cowboys, Coca Cola, the Statue of Liberty, hot dogs, baseball, and rock and roll music. But does that represent all Americans? Hardly.

If you have lived in the US even for a short time or traveled around the country, you know, or at least have a sense, that the culture in California is different from that in New York. Americans still refer to "The South", meaning the former Confederate states, and there is a distinct Southern culture. There is also white and black and Hispanic American and Native American culture. There is upper-, middle- and working-class culture, youth culture, street culture, Wall street culture...the list goes on. And it's the same in your country. Within every modern nation state are diverse groups of people with a wide range of cultural roots and cultural practices.

### **Big culture and little culture**

National and ethnic cultures, along with the world's major religions, are 'big' culture. In most major cities, there are ethnic enclaves, areas with a high concentration of people from a particular culture. Most major cities have a Chinatown and a Little Italy and other well-known areas where one can dine or shop in a particular cultural flavor.

People carry their big cultures with them and part of the struggle of any immigrant group is making a space for their culture in the existing and well established demographic landscape. For example, from 1820 to 1860, nearly two million Irish immigrants arrived in America. As newcomers, they were, for the most part, treated with contempt and cruelly exploited. Today there is an annual St. Patrick's Day Parade in New York City and it's on national television. Oktoberfest is celebrated wherever there is a German community, and if there are more than a few people of Chinese origin in your community, you know when it's Chinese New Year.

It may be some time before Eid Al-Fitr, the Muslim end-of-Ramadan celebration, is as easily accepted or gets such public attention, but the day will come.

Social classes are also big cultures. Middle-class parents teach their kids self-control and consideration for others and place a high value on curiosity and self-direction. Working-class parents teach their children the importance of good manners, fitting in, and deference to authority. These are different ways of seeing the world and this is one reason kids from working-class families often have a form of culture shock in their first year of university, which is predominantly a middle-class culture, certainly in the Ivy League and better known private universities. Some universities actually offer counseling to students from different backgrounds to help them adapt. They don't use the term cultural intelligence but counseling has the effect of raising awareness of the cultural differences and teaching newcomers some strategies they can use to work more effectively in their new culture.

Now for little culture.

Professions and trades are also cultures. Doctors and lawyers view the world differently than do plumbers and electricians. They speak, think and dress differently. A lawyer wears a suit every day and the cut and quality of her suit is a mark of her status within the group. She has suits for the office and suits she wears to court. The plumber has one suit he wears to weddings and funerals.

'Little' cultures are often referred to as subcultures. Bikers, punk rockers, gamers, cosplay, goth, hippies, nudists, skinheads. Wikipedia has a list of over a hundred subcultures. Each and every subculture has a history, a specific way of speaking and dressing, and a set of beliefs, attitudes and values. Often there are books and magazines and events and pubs and coffee shops where the 'citizens' of that culture meet and hang out.

The thing about little cultures is you can belong to more than one. You can try them on like a new pair of running shoes. In high school, your son or daughter might go in for the goth look, move on to punk, end up becoming a hip-hop graffiti artist, and then go to college and become a graphic designer.

Our lawyer from above might be an avid gamer at home and the electrician a biohacker on the side. They might meet and fall in love and become weekend bikers.

## **Language**

Language is both an indicator of culture and a window into culture. Language is one of the most important ways in which culture is encoded. For example, the bedtime stories we tell our children contain codes or rules for cultural behavior as do common 'wisdom sayings' like, "everything in moderation" or "time is money".

Generally, if you have a distinct language group, and that includes a dialect group, you have a different culture. For example, in Indonesia, there are over 700 distinct language groups, each one a culture with its own history, customs, norms, and codes of conduct.

A dialect is a slightly different variety of a language. In the United States for example, there are 24 linguistically distinct dialects of English. Think Texas drawl, the Southern "Y'all" and the Bostonian "pahk yah cah in Hahvad yahd" and the very different cultures of those regions. Those cultural differences may be subtle, but they are real.

If you want to understand a culture, and this is the knowledge part of cultural intelligence, learn something about the language. You don't have to learn to speak the language to learn something about it.

For example, in English we have eight personal pronouns: I, you, he, she, it, we, our and they. That's it. Men and women use the same pronouns. Kids and CEO's of multinational corporations use the same pronouns. Not so in Thai.

In the Thai language, there are pronouns only men use and pronouns only women use. Women have a choice of thirteen pronouns and must learn to use them appropriately according to the age of the other speaker, their social status, family or business relationship, and the context in which they are speaking. What does that tell us about Thai culture? It suggests that Thais are acutely sensitive to social status. Living in Thailand the last 25 years I can verify that from personal experience. Here is one example.

In Thailand, people don't shake hands they wai. You put your palms together in front of your chest as if in prayer and give a slight nod of the head. There is a complex set of 'rules' governing who wais who, when, and how. A younger person should wai an older person first, and a person of lower status should wai the person of higher social status first. The action of forming and presenting the wai can be casual, formal, sloppy, disrespectful, careless or submissive depending on how carefully the hands are held, how high and for how long. None of this is written down anywhere but you can see parents and older siblings instructing toddlers from an early age.

So, the older male American engineer who enthusiastically wais the security guard, the cleaner, the receptionist and the young woman opening the door at the restaurant where he is taking his Thai colleagues to lunch, thinks he has adapted his behavior to Thai culture, when all the while he is announcing his cultural ignorance. His Thai colleagues think he is cute. If he is lucky, someone will take him aside and teach him the rules. Following the wai rules will make him more effective in Thai culture.

Back to language and how you learn about it.

I always start with Wikipedia.

Wikipedia has pages on most major languages that contain lots of this kind of information. For example, I just looked at the Wikipedia page for Japanese and learned that,

"Japanese, like many other Asian languages, is called a topic-prominent language, which means it has a strong tendency to indicate the topic separately from the subject."

A subject-prominent language like English puts the subject first, for example, the doer of the action, as in "I like chocolate." A topic-prominent language, like Japanese, puts the topic first, the thing the sentence is about, as in "Chocolate, I like". What this means in practical terms is there is room for misunderstanding even though our Japanese counterpart may be speaking quite fluent English.

You do not need to become an expert in the grammar of a language. More to the point, digging into the Wikipedia pages and finding little points like this gives you material you can use to ask questions, and people in any culture love the chance to teach a foreigner something about “their language”. We could call it a universal trait.

## **Cultural universals**

Beneath our many wonderful differences, we are surprisingly alike. These fundamental likenesses are called ‘cultural universals’. ‘Universal’ because no one has yet found any exception in any society past or present. For example:

All societies, past and present, without exception, have ways of organizing how people live together in communities and groups. These ways of organizing cover things like:

- Family life
- Social classes
- Roles assigned by gender, age and social status
- Education and
- Leisure activities

Another universal: people in all societies create, express, and appreciate beauty through:

- Art
- Music
- Dance
- Literature and
- Leisure or folk activities

All societies have customs, rules, and mechanisms for decision-making that relate to the production, development, management and consumption of goods and services, which we usually call an economy.

All societies have beliefs in the form of:

- Religion
- Myths and
- Rituals, traditions, customs and ceremonies for birth, marriage, death and other cultural occasions.

And finally, all societies have political structures governing things like:

- Citizenship
- Leadership
- Laws
- Institutions and
- Decision-making

So, if underneath we are all similar, what accounts for the huge variation in how societies organize themselves? This is one of the great mysteries of culture. To understand that mystery, we need some sort of framework.

A framework for understanding culture

In 2014, two psychologists, Hazel Rose Markus and Alana Conner, published “Clash: How to thrive in a multicultural world.” The book has been a runaway success for a good reason: it’s informative, well-researched, entertaining and easy to read. In chapter 2, Markus and Conner offer a model or framework for how culture works.

To begin, all cultures are shaped by what they call ‘Big Ideas’. In Western culture, Big Ideas go back to ancient Greece and the ideas of people like Plato and Aristotle. The Renaissance and the Enlightenment period added more Big Ideas. In Asia, Big Ideas go back to philosophers like Confucius and Lao Tzu. Big Ideas become ‘cultural assumptions’. These are the things we learn from infancy (those bedtime stories again) and we usually accept them as true without question.

For example, anyone with Western European ancestry will feel quite comfortable with this list of cultural assumptions:

- \* There is a real world that exists outside ourselves which is rational and ordered and runs according to natural laws.
- \* There is a distinction between the physical world and the spiritual world, the natural and the supernatural.
- \* We highly value material things, almost assuming them to be rights, for example, good homes, hot running water, comfortable beds, enough food.
- \* We sort reality into opposing categories. Something is white or black, good or bad, true or false. There is work and there is play. There is public and there is private.
- \* Everyone is an individual, each person is their own authority with their own identity. Individual freedom is the right of all. We are all equals.

A large part of cultural intelligence is understanding that other cultures are based on sometimes diametrically opposed cultural assumptions, and accepting those assumptions without making value judgments.

So the model for culture goes like this:

Big Ideas become cultural assumptions, which shape cultural institutions, which shape individual selves and behavior.

But it works the other way as well: individuals interact with one another and with institutions to influence Big Ideas.

'Institution' does not always mean a building like a school or a hospital. Institution means a Big Idea like 'rule of law' or 'individual development', which often end up in buildings like police stations and courts and schools. You can go to school and the institution of public education shapes who you become. But we also shape institutions.

To illustrate how that works, let's look at the 'institution' of marriage.

In most of the world for most of history, marriage meant a union between a man and a woman. This union is recognized or 'sanctified' by a ceremony conducted by tribal elders or the Church or the state. But not everyone agreed with the idea of a legally binding relationship and gradually, 'common law' marriages became more open and acceptable. In some countries, your common law partner has the same legal rights and benefits as a marriage partner. Through their actions, people have kept changing the institution of marriage so that now in some countries same-sex marriage is possible.

Institutions shape our concept of self and our behavior, our behavior shapes our institutions.

The point is, culture is always changing. Men and women have always lived together without being married, but it took a long time before that practice became culturally acceptable, and that is true only in some cultures. Homosexuality has always been present in every society, but only in the last couple of decades has it been possible to be openly gay or lesbian, and only in some cultures. Part of our cultural intelligence is understanding that culture is not a 'thing', it isn't fixed, it's dynamic.

Think of it this way, if culture didn't change, would you ever hear parents and authority figures say, "What the heck is wrong with young people today!"

## Chapter 4: Intelligence

Main points in this chapter:

1. The definition and measurement of intelligence remains controversial.
2. The concept of cultural intelligence derives, in part, from the work of psychologists Douglas Detterman and Robert Sternberg.
3. Howard Gardner's concept of multiple intelligences includes eight 'intelligence modules'.
4. Social intelligence is a reformulation of Gardner's multiple intelligences.
5. The idea of emotional intelligence, whilst popular in the public arena, has little support among psychologists.

### A little background on IQ testing

In 1904, the French Ministry of Education asked psychologist Alfred Binet to come up with a method to identify students who were failing to learn from classroom instruction so they could be given remedial work. Binet worked with another psychologist, Théodore Simon, and together they came up with the imaginatively titled Binet-Simon intelligence test. Their test used a single number, the intelligence quotient or IQ, to represent an individual's score on the test.

Now known as the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale, it remains one of the most well-known and widely used measures of intelligence and is used for clinical and neuro-psychological assessment, educational placement, compensation evaluations, career assessment, adult neuro-psychological treatment, forensics, and research on aptitude.

From the beginning, there have been concerns with the whole idea of measuring intelligence. What exactly is intelligence? Is it your capacity for logic and abstract thought, for understanding, for self-awareness, communication, learning; is it emotional knowledge, memory, planning, creativity and problem solving, or all of the above? Can all this be reduced to a single number?

The other major concern with measuring intelligence is cultural bias. It has been shown, for example, that middle-class students perform better than kids from disadvantaged neighborhoods because children from more affluent homes generally get better schooling and more exposure to things like music and art, and they get extra help on school subjects if they are doing poorly. In short, they get more practice at things intelligence tests tend to measure.

Modern IQ tests try to address these concerns and come with careful warnings about their limitations. Others have continued to search for alternative approaches to the whole idea of IQ testing. Whatever the approach or theory, the central question driving research on intelligence is simply this: Why are some people smarter than others? We are still looking for the answer.

## The science behind cultural intelligence

One of your first questions to anyone giving you their pitch on cultural intelligence is, “What’s the science behind your approach?” If they can’t give you a coherent answer, one you can understand in plain English, tell them you will think about it and call them back.

Livermore, Van Dynn, Soon Ang and their colleagues can give you a coherent answer and will tell you their work is grounded in research by Douglas Detterman, Robert Sternberg and others of their ilk. Before we get to them, however, we need to make a brief visit to the turn of the 20th Century to meet Charles Edward Spearman.

Spearman was an English psychologist most well-known for his work in statistics. If you have ever heard the terms factor analysis or Spearman's rank correlation coefficient, that’s the guy. Spearman was also interested in intelligence and came up with a theory that scores on different cognitive tasks all reflect a single general intelligence factor he called *g*. That’s *g* factor, not *g* spot. People have been arguing about *g* ever since. Factor and spot.

One of the major criticisms of *g* is that it is only a correlation between performance on different tasks. For example, if you do well on one task that requires logical thinking, chances are you will do well on other logical thinking tasks. One thing scientists in all disciplines do agree on is that correlation does not imply causation. For example, there is a very strong correlation between the per capita consumption of mozzarella cheese and the number of civil engineering doctorates awarded in the USA. That’s actually true, I didn’t make that up, I found it on a rather entertaining website called “spurious correlations”.

Back to *g*. There might be something causing that correlation we call *g*, but we don’t know what it is yet.

More recently, Douglas K. Detterman, a well-known and influential intelligence researcher, has continued to think about *g*. His research shows correlations between scores on IQ tests are highest in people with the lowest IQs, and less obvious in people with average and high IQs. Detterman believes this suggests people with very low IQs, “have a deficit in something that powers all areas of cognition, rather than discrete deficits in specific information processing capabilities.” His use of the term “specific information processing capabilities” is interesting, as you will see shortly.

Detterman currently defines intelligence as, “the ability to achieve one’s goals in life, given one’s sociocultural context; by capitalizing on strengths and correcting or compensating for weaknesses; in order to adapt to, shape, and select environments; through a combination of analytical, creative, and practical abilities.”

You can easily see how this fits with the definition of cultural intelligence as, “the capacity to work effectively across cultures”.

Another prominent researcher and colleague of Detterman is Robert Sternberg. Sternberg was among the first researchers to challenge the correlational approach and offer an alternative view of intelligence.

Sternberg's definition of human intelligence is, "a mental activity directed towards purposive adaptation to, selection and shaping of, real world environments relevant to one's life". In other words, intelligence is how well an individual copes with change throughout their life, and this would include their capacity to work effectively across cultures.

Sternberg also proposed that intelligence can be understood in terms of a set of basic information processing components that contribute to people's intelligence and account for individual differences. He later expanded his definition to include not just the analytical and logical aspects of intelligence, but the creative and practical aspects as well.

Detterman's specific information processing capabilities; Sternberg's basic information processing components? Could it be there is more than one kind of intelligence?  
Multiple intelligences

In 1983, developmental psychologist Howard Gardner published *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. Gardner came to intelligence research via the arts and writing about what happens to gifted artists who suffer the loss of their gift as a result of a stroke or other brain trauma. The Project on Human Potential at the Harvard School of Education invited Gardner to write a book about what research in biological and behavioral sciences had established about human cognition, and so began what would become his theory of multiple intelligences.

Gardner is a gifted pianist and a talented writer as well as a rigorous scientist. Before he would consider any cognitive ability an intelligence or modality, it had to meet all eight of the following criteria:

1. Evidence of isolation from brain damage, that is, individuals who have experienced brain damage by accident or disease can no longer use a particular intelligence. A common example is the loss of speech following a heart attack or head trauma.
2. An intelligence must have an evolutionary history and evolutionary plausibility, such that it confers some survival value for those who possess it. For example, people with little or no interpersonal intelligence have great difficulty fitting into a social group, and in our early evolutionary history, individual survival was closely tied to the group.
3. An intelligence must have an identifiable core operation or set of operations.
4. An intelligence can be encoded in a symbol system, such as language or musical notation.
5. An intelligence has a developmental history in that individuals must go through a process of maturing the intelligence until they can perform a set of expert performances.
6. The existence of savants, prodigies, and other exceptional people with special abilities. Think Mozart, Picasso and Albert Einstein.

7. Support from experimental tasks, such as transfer of skills to new tasks, and interference among tasks.
8. Support from psychometric findings.

Using these criteria, Gardner eventually identified eight intelligences: 1) musical-rhythmic, 2) visual-spatial, 3) verbal-linguistic, 4) logical-mathematical, 5) bodily-kinesthetic, 6) interpersonal, 7) intra-personal, and 8) naturalistic.

Think of the intelligence modalities as a Swiss army knife. We all have all the modalities but we use some more than others. Some we sharpen and some just stay folded in the case. For example, as a child I never got to exercise my musical-rhythmic intelligence so it isn't very strong now. That doesn't mean I can't improve on it. I could take up ballroom dancing and join a choir, and while I doubt I would get to the finals on America's Got Talent, I could become reasonably competent and fully enjoy myself.

Also, different cultures put different emphasis on different modalities. For example, in contrast to my musically and rhythmically deprived working-class upbringing, middle- and upper-class kids routinely got carted off to piano and ballet lessons.

Gardner was and remains opposed to the idea of pigeonholing people as having a specific intelligence. For example, 'visual' versus 'auditory' learners. According to Gardner, an intelligence is "a bio-psychological potential to process information that can be activated in a cultural setting to solve problems or create products that are of value in a culture."

You will notice that 'cultural' is not on Gardner's list of intelligences. However, if we look closely at his definition, we can see a fit with the definition of cultural intelligence. The "capacity to work effectively across cultures" could be seen as "the potential to process information in a cultural setting to solve problems."

To do that, work effectively across cultures, you would need to activate your interpersonal and intra-personal intelligence modules. Your verbal-linguistic module would come in handy to help you adapt your use of language, and your bodily-kinesthetic module would help you notice then mirror the body language of people in the other culture. Your other intelligences would help you work out strategy and acquire more knowledge of the other culture.

What I am suggesting is the term 'cultural intelligence' is a useful way to describe a particular way of using our multiple intelligence modules. And why am I suggesting that?

First, we can't be calling every cognitive skill or talent or ability an intelligence, otherwise the term loses its value.

And second, I think linking it to multiple intelligences extends the scientific ground on which cultural intelligence can be based and helps explain the intelligence part of the term beyond "work more effectively". I don't know what Howard Gardner would think or Soon Ang and

her colleagues. I am hoping they will tell me. David Livermore very generously did, hence the earlier sections on Detterman and Sternberg.

A note on social and emotional intelligences

## **Social intelligence**

The idea of social intelligence, or SQ, goes back to the 1920s and work by psychologists Edward Thorndike at Columbia University and Thelma Hunt at George Washington University. The simple definition of SQ is, “the ability to get along well with others, and to get them to cooperate with you.” SQ has most recently been popularized by psychologist Karl Albrecht in his book “Social Intelligence: The New Science of Success”, published in 2009, and Daniel Goleman’s 2007 book, “Social Intelligence: The New Science of Human Relationships”.

Academics love to tinker and split hairs and like many others, Albrecht has taken Howard Gardner’s multiple intelligences and rearranged them into what he feels is a simpler model more suited to business and professional settings. Social intelligence equates to Gardner’s inter- and intra-personal intelligences.

One of the best known and most used tests of social intelligence is the George Washington University Social Intelligence Test, first devised by Thelma Hunt in the 1920s and now in its second edition. The full test is comprised of five parts that measure judgment in social situations, recognition of the mental state of a speaker, memory for names and faces, observation of human behavior, and sense of humor.

Tests of social intelligence—when properly administered and interpreted—can help identify certain types of students with ‘adjustment problems’ and in industry and business it has been found useful in selecting and placing people in jobs involving interpersonal relationships such as sales or supervisory work.

## **Emotional intelligence**

As with social intelligence, there is nothing especially new about emotional intelligence although the marketing hype would have us believe so. The term first appeared in a chapter by Michael Beldoch in a book titled, “The Communication of Emotional Meaning”, published in 1964. Daniel Goleman, a prolific writer, psychologist, and science journalist popularized the term in his 1995 book “Emotional Intelligence”.

Emotional intelligence, sometimes shortened to EI or EQ, is defined as, “the capacity of individuals to recognize their own, and other people’s emotions, to discriminate between different feelings and label them appropriately, to use emotional information to guide thinking and behavior, and to manage and adjust emotions to achieve one’s goals.” Basically this is the intra-personal intelligence in the Gardner model of multiple intelligences.

There are several tests of EQ, including the EQ-i, the Swinburne University Emotional Intelligence Test, the Schutte EI model, and a number of self-report tests. Critics claim none of these tests assess actual abilities or skills but are instead measures of 'traits'. Traits are self-perceptions and are an indication of our 'self-efficacy' or our own belief in our skills and abilities.

Other criticisms are that tests of EI or EQ are really measuring conformity not ability, or that one's knowledge of emotions doesn't necessarily translate into an ability to perform tasks related to that knowledge. For example, I know when I am angry and I know that shouting at a sales clerk for what I think is poor service is not a good thing to do, but that doesn't mean I can control my anger. Some researchers claim these tests are measuring aspects of personality and that self-report measures are easily faked.

There is no question that some people are more emotionally mature and stable and have better control over their emotions than others. We know them when we meet them and they are generally quite likable and nice to have around, but it seems the jury is still out on whether EQ qualifies as an intelligence. Nonetheless, the idea makes intuitive sense and the term is a useful shorthand when discussing the shortcomings of our colleagues at work.

## **Chapter 5: Cultural intelligence: What you need to know**

Main points in this chapter:

1. A brief history of cultural intelligence.
2. Six cautions.

### **A little background**

The term 'cultural intelligence' appears in the academic literature as far back as the late 1970s. Then as now, it was a popular topic among academics doing research on culture, language and business studies. There was and still is a keen interest among those in the diplomatic services and the military. In the diplomatic service, "...the use of cultural intelligence and other methods of soft power have been endorsed and encouraged as a primary tool of statecraft." Military commanders since Genghis Khan and Julius Caesar have understood the value of knowing how the enemy thinks, so it isn't surprising cultural intelligence is playing an important role in the success of military operations in counterinsurgency.

Cultural intelligence began to attract attention in the public arena in the early 2000s. In 2003, Christopher Earley and Soon Ang published "Cultural Intelligence: Individual Interactions Across Cultures". Earley is a professor of organizational behavior at the University of Tasmania in New Zealand, a strong advocate of workplace diversity, and consults for multinational companies like Unilever, Nestle, Cisco, Samsung and British Aerospace.

Soon Ang currently heads the Division of Strategy, Management and Organization at the Nanyang Business School and is a recognized world authority on cultural intelligence. Ang's ideas on cultural intelligence are widely regarded as cogent, well-researched and comprehensive.

In 2009, Linn Van Dyne, a full professor at Michigan State University, published "Cultural Intelligence: A Pathway for Leading in a Rapidly Globalizing World" with Soon Ang and David Livermore. In the same year, Livermore published two books, "Cultural Intelligence" and "Leading with Cultural Intelligence". Leading with Cultural Intelligence was a best-seller in business and his latest book, "Driven by Difference", published in 2016, has received high praise from media, researchers, and executives around the globe.

Livermore also has academic credibility. He leads the Cultural Intelligence Center in East Lansing, Michigan, and is a visiting research fellow at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. In addition to his academic credentials, he has a wealth of practical experience from 20 years in leadership positions with non-profit organizations around the world. He is a frequent speaker and adviser to Fortune 500 companies, non-profits, and governments, and has worked in more than 100 countries.

These are not people who bang off books to cash in on popular trends.

There are now scores, even hundreds of other academics, consultants and coaches offering their books, advice and services, but Earley, Van Dyne, Soon Ang and Livermore are the current 'leading lights' of the cultural intelligence movement and a good place to begin if you want to learn more. You can easily find these and other authors on Amazon books if you want to dive deeper into this topic. Before you do, consider a few cautionary notes. Proceed with caution

As I said in the introduction, cultural intelligence is a hot topic right now. There is a tendency these days to call almost any cognitive ability an intelligence. Calling something an intelligence is smart marketing because it piggybacks on the media momentum of other popular ideas such as multiple, emotional and social intelligence.

As an example, how about 'accounting intelligence'. Seriously.

Two researchers at a management school in New Zealand recently published a paper in an academic journal titled, Accounting Intelligence: What it is and why it matters. The content is actually about producing, "...guidelines for a response to changes within the accounting industry and accountants' practice, and to make them accessible, attractive, and actionable." It really has nothing to do with intelligence, but it makes for a catchy title. You will see this a lot. But this is not the only thing you need to watch out for.

### **Caution No. 1: Free advice is worth what you pay for it**

Because it is so popular, everyone wants to jump on the cultural intelligence bandwagon. One result is a proliferation of advice that, on closer inspection, is pretty much useless. Here is an example from a website at random:

"Develop an awareness of your biases towards other cultures and traditions. Learn and practice ways to break away from those biases. Awareness without practice keeps people culturally ignorant."

That sounds so wise and reasonable your brain is tricked into thinking you understand something. Unfortunately, it ignores the nature of bias and there is nothing in those lines I can act on. How do I actually go about 'developing an awareness' of my biases? How do I break away from a bias?

A bias is, "a prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another, usually in a way considered to be unfair", and prejudice is, "an unfavorable opinion or feeling formed beforehand or without knowledge, thought, or reason".

How can I become aware of thoughts formed without knowledge, conscious thought or reason?

Suppose, as an example, I say, “I don’t think Muslim women should cover their faces if they live in my country.” Let’s say ‘my country’ in this case is France, where this has been a bit of an issue. The trouble is, I don’t consider this a bias. I believe this is right and proper, and believe me I can tell you why! If you tell me I am biased or worse, I am a racist, I will push back and tell you that you are the one with a bias. The usual outcome from this kind of confrontation is people go away more entrenched than ever in their own positions.

I am not suggesting it is impossible to change my own or other people’s beliefs and attitudes or change behaviors, it just isn’t easy.

Over the years, psychologists have gathered reams of evidence for a whole catalog of biases that are hardwired into our brains. These biases are part of the way we think and have been consistently demonstrated in scores of clever laboratory and social experiments. Here is just one you will probably recognize, the availability heuristic.

This is the tendency to overestimate the likelihood of events with greater availability in memory or easy recall. For example, are there more words in the English language beginning with the letter ‘r’ than with the letter ‘r’ in the third position?

Most people will say beginning with ‘r’ because it is much easier to recall words like race, rice, room, run. It takes more mental work to recall words with ‘r’ as the third letter. Air, car, bird, cart. Beginning ‘r’ words are more available.

Ever heard of the focusing effect? This is the tendency to overemphasize the importance of just one or a few prominent features of a person, place or thing. For example, in which US state do you think people are happier, Hawaii or North Dakota? My first response was to say Hawaii because it has a great climate, fantastic beaches, surfing, and beautiful women in grass skirts, not to mention lots of “feel good” movies set in Hawaii like 50 First Dates, Forgetting Sarah Marshall and Lilo and Stitch.

North Dakota has...what exactly? Lots of open space, cold winters, wolves. There have been movies set in North Dakota but they are fewer and tend to be grim, like Fargo and The Messengers.

So which state is happier?

Gallup, the famous polling company, and Healthways, a well-being improvement company, issue an annual well-being index, which quantifies how happy each state is based on a set of criteria including physical and emotional health, healthy behaviors, work environment, social and community factors, financial security, and access to necessities such as food, shelter and healthcare. These are the features I didn’t think about when I made my evaluation. The rankings change from year to year, but in 2013, the last year I could find data for, North Dakota ranked in first place and Hawaii came in at number 8.

That's the focusing effect at work.

I could ask, "Are you aware you have these biases?" and you would probably say, "Yes, I am aware", because we are all biased to think we are smarter than we actually are. In an experimental situation, chances are you and I would display these and many other known biases.

It is possible to train yourself to be more aware of these mental habits and there are techniques you can use with a group to control for them, but it isn't easy. Once we move into the social realm it becomes even more difficult.

The bottom line is, breaking free of your biases is far more easily said than done. Which brings us to the next caution.

### **Caution No. 2: Do not underestimate the effort required**

I have been living in Thailand for 25 years now. My wife of 23 years is Thai and at home we speak our own domestic creole of English, Thai and Isan, the northeastern dialect my wife grew up with. My use of Thai and Isan outside the home is fair. I have a Thai driver's license, a work permit, credit card, social security number, house registration book, and supermarket member cards. I live in a Thai community. I negotiate with Thai tradesmen and interact with noodle vendors, shop clerks, traffic cops, government officials, students, clients and people I meet in cafes and at the park.

And the longer I live here the more I realize how much I have yet to learn, both about the many Thai cultures big and little, and my own responses to those cultures.

Every year I peel back another layer of the onion, and every year I learn something new about myself. I continue to read about Thai culture and history, continue to work on my language skills, continue to gently probe my Thai friends and colleagues and other long-stay foreigners about their thoughts and experiences. Now and then I gain some small insight into some aspect of the cultures that swirl around me. It is hard work and it never lets up. It can be as incredibly frustrating as it can be rewarding.

The same is true if you are living in your native country dealing with lots of big and little cultures in your own neighborhood, your community, or your place of work. As in the Nike commercial, there is no finish line, so don't fall into the trap of thinking you have got it all figured out.

### **Caution No. 3: Think carefully about your motivation**

The motivational factor in the cultural intelligence model is your interest, confidence, and drive to adapt cross-culturally. In a book chapter published in 2009, Van Dyne, Soon Ang, and David Livermore have this to say about motivation:

“Many of the other approaches to thinking about cross-cultural competencies simply assume that people are motivated to gain cross-cultural capabilities. Without ample motivation, there is little point in spending time and money on training. Motivational cultural intelligence includes intrinsic motivation—the degree to which you derive enjoyment from culturally diverse situations, extrinsic motivation—the more tangible benefits you gain from culturally diverse experiences, and self-efficacy—your confidence that you will be effective in a cross-cultural encounter.”

It is important you reflect carefully on those aspects of motivation so you can define specific goals and targets related to knowledge, strategy and action. It is easy to enjoy learning about the culture of northern Italy on a three-week vacation, but will I enjoy working every day with resettled Syrian refugees?

#### **Caution No. 4: Filter what you hear**

Living in Thailand all these years, it's easy to spot the new guys. They are the ones who have Thai culture all figured out and can tell me “Thais are this...” and “Thais don't do that...”. I ask them how long they have lived in Thailand and the answer varies between eighteen and thirty-six months. People who last longer than that either retreat into an expat bubble or become much more careful with their pronouncements about what Thais are and are not.

It is wise to keep in mind that whatever your situation, living outside your own country or working with other cultures in your own, everyone has a different experience. I am interested in your experience and your perspective, but I am going to think very carefully about what you say before I act on any of your advice or insights.

#### **Caution No. 5: Be wary of the claims that people make about cultural intelligence**

New products, discoveries and ideas are like magnets to entrepreneurs and a whole class of people in search of something to hang their hats on. One of my favorite examples is the use of fMRI as a lie detection device.

fMRI, or functional magnetic resonance imaging, measures where and how much oxygen different parts of your brain are using. It has become a common tool to examine brain anatomy, evaluate the effects of stroke or disease, and because it can detect abnormalities within the brain that cannot be found with other imaging techniques, doctors use it to guide treatment. Scientists also use it as a research tool to understand how the brain works. For example, which (if any) mental functions can be localized to specific brain regions? Do I do math in my left brain and art in my right, or is it a bit more complicated than that? Is the fusiform gyrus the seat of facial recognition or does it perform other functions as well?

MRI, has helped us understand a great deal about how the brain works, but can it be used as a lie detector?

There is, to date, no scientific evidence suggesting it can. Despite the lack of evidence, a number of entrepreneurs have set up companies and claim they can tell you if your job applicants or your employees are lying. This is highly unlikely given the present state of MRI technology, plus the still rudimentary understanding of how the brain works, plus the complex nature of deception in human social groups. It can be demonstrated that some people really believe they are telling the truth when they are not.

Scanning brains to detect lies is still science fiction, but it doesn't stop well and not-so-well intended people from charging large fees for the service.

Wild claims and science seem to go hand in hand. How about, "groundbreaking study shows cannabis can counter Alzheimer's disease". This exciting headline is about research done at the Salk Institute, a highly respected research institution established in 1957 by Jonas Salk, the man who gave us the polio vaccine. The Salk Institute does not do junk science, so what is behind this headline?

If you follow the link in the article it takes you to the Salk website, where you can read the press release written by the Salk Institute. Here is what the Salk press release says:

"Salk Institute scientists have found preliminary evidence that tetrahydrocannabinol and other compounds found in marijuana can promote the cellular removal of amyloid beta, a toxic protein associated with Alzheimer's disease. While these exploratory studies were conducted in neurons grown in the laboratory, they may offer insight into the role of inflammation in Alzheimer's disease and could provide clues to developing novel therapeutics for the disorder."

Notice how carefully, how cautiously the Salk Institute qualifies their claim: preliminary evidence, exploratory studies, may offer insights, and could provide clues. That is a far cry from the declarative statement, "cannabis can counter Alzheimer's disease".

In all fairness, the writer of the "groundbreaking" headline was probably trying to drive traffic to the Salk website and not trying to deceive anyone. Where you have to be especially careful is when there is money involved. While advocates of cultural intelligence don't claim it can cure Alzheimer's, you can expect to meet people making equally extravagant claims, so be wary and always check the facts.

### **Caution No. 6: You don't have to go native**

There are few things as obvious or as embarrassing as someone trying too hard to "be one of the gang", so unless you are an undercover cop, maintain your boundaries.

I don't drink alcohol but in many of the client cultures I work in, drinking after work is a ritual practice. I go to the pub, the bar, the corner noodle shop and order Coca Cola or soda water. When people ask, I just say, "I don't drink" and continue the conversation. When people start showing signs of inebriation, I quietly take my leave. I participate in the ritual but I maintain my personal boundaries, and people respect me for it. A large part of cultural intelligence is learning how to maintain your own beliefs and values in a culturally diverse setting.

## **Chapter 6: Summing up**

### **Is cultural intelligence here to stay?**

Do you remember Six Sigma? Total quality management? How about business process re-engineering, matrix management, and core competencies? These management fads were once all the rage and then died a quiet death as fads do. Business isn't the only profession or field subject to fads. Education, medicine, even science is subject to faddish ideas. Most come and go without doing much harm. We can look at fads positively and say they are a reflection of our constant search for new and better ways of doing things. Or it could be we are suckers for anything shiny and new. Perhaps a little of both.

So is cultural intelligence just another fad, or is this a concept with enough substance to have day-to-day practical value now and for years to come? Will it get better with age?

I am hoping it will. It is my personal opinion that if we are to survive as a species, we need to foster greater tolerance for diversity of all kinds.

I grew up in a working-class environment that was pretty much exclusively white, Anglo-Saxon and Protestant. I never actually met anyone from another culture until my first year of university. Since then I have traveled, lived and worked in 30 countries on five continents. Most of my friends and colleagues are a veritable United Nations of cultures and live all over the map. My world has changed dramatically over the course of my life. So has yours. The question is, "Are you willing to change with it?"

Like it or not, you and I are going to be dealing with more people from more different cultures, big and little. Even if you never leave your home town, never work for a multinational company, you will be meeting and mixing with same-sex couples and people from one end of the LGBT spectrum to the other, right-wing evangelists, Mormons, millennials, Hispanics, Native Americans, and folks-from-away.

Understanding these labels as codes for cultures will help you at work, in your community, and in your neighborhood.

For me, the real benefit to cultural intelligence is what you learn about yourself. Whatever culture or cultures you are dealing with, big or little, be prepared to learn more about your own capacity for patience, tolerance, ambiguity and uncertainty, resilience, acceptance, and the beauty in small things and small moments.

I will leave you with a quote from Mikhail Gorbachev, Russian politician, environmentalist, social activist, and 1990 Nobel Peace Prize Winner: "Peace is not unity in similarity but unity in diversity".

Enjoy this beautiful diverse world we live in and please continue your journey learning more about cultural intelligence.