CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE

LIVING AND WORKING GLOBALLY

SECOND EDITION, REVISED and UPDATED

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An Excerpt From

Cultural Intelligence:
Living and Working Globally, Second Edition

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Contents

Preface

This book is an update of our first book on cultural intelligence, the basis of the people skills that are critical to management success in today's global environment. In this second edition we apply these concepts more broadly to the interactions of people not just in organizations but more broadly in their daily lives.

In October 2008, as we—Kerr in Auckland, New Zealand, and Dave in Vancouver, Canada—were working on the final draft of this edition, we were once again reminded of the forces of globalization that are shaping the environment in which we must all learn to function. The global nature of the financial crisis that began with subprime mortgages in the United States but resonated around the world made the degree of integration of the economies in the world fairly obvious. Globalization has many effects, but one of the most important is the dramatic increase in the opportunity and need to interact with people who are culturally different from ourselves.

Both of us live in very multicultural cities and are reminded in our daily lives of the tremendous variety of attitudes, values, beliefs, and assumptions about appropriate behavior that

culturally different individuals hold. Yet in order to solve the problems of today's global society, indeed in order to function day to day, we must learn to understand and integrate these differences. The range of cultures we encounter may be slightly unusual, but only slightly as migration patterns respond to rapid economic and political changes occurring around the world. The world is becoming more interdependent; to keep pace we must all learn to think globally—we must all develop our *cultural intelligence!*

This book is about becoming more effective in dealing with people from different cultural backgrounds. It is about acquiring the global people skills that are important for functioning in the twenty-first century and beyond. It is for people who travel overseas and encounter new cultures, as well as for those who stay at home and find that other cultures have come to them. It is about acquiring the *cultural intelligence* in order not only to survive without difficulty or embarrassment in our new multicultural environment but also to pursue our goals in this environment with the confidence needed for success.

Like its predecessor, this book is different from many other books you may have seen about cross-cultural skills or living and working in other countries.

First, this book is not country-specific. We do not provide laundry lists of drills and routines that should be applied in this country or that. Our intent is rather to help you to acquire a way of thinking and being that can be applied to any number of countries and cultures.

Second, this book is based on years of sound academic research. However, it is not an academic text, and we have tried to present important concepts in a straightforward way. To make the learning concrete, we have illustrated each chapter with a number of case studies in cross-cultural behavior, from various cultural settings.

Finally, we don't promise that this book will solve all your interpersonal problems, either at work or in your daily life.

However, we sincerely believe that if you read and apply the concepts outlined here, you will be well on your way to acquiring a critical contemporary skill—cultural intelligence.

Cultural intelligence builds on earlier concepts that you have probably heard of: the intelligence quotient (IQ) and emotional intelligence (EQ), the idea that it is important how we handle our emotions. Cultural intelligence (CQ) incorporates the capability to interact effectively across cultures.

The concept is easy to understand, but it takes time and effort to develop high levels of cultural intelligence. However, becoming culturally intelligent is essentially learning by doing and has useful outcomes beyond the development of skilled intercultural performance. In addition, different cultures are fascinating, and learning them can be a lot of fun. This book is the place to start the journey.

The first three chapters outline the fundamentals of cultural intelligence. Chapter 1 shows how a lack of cultural intelligence can negatively affect intercultural interactions. It examines the problems with current methods of addressing these cross-cultural issues and identifies acquiring cultural intelligence as a more productive approach. The next two chapters outline the principles and practice of cultural intelligence. Chapter 2 helps you to *understand* what cultural differences are and how they are reflected in different people's behavior. Chapter 3 helps you to *discard your assumptions* about the way people "should" behave, practice *mindfulness*—a kind of attention to culturally based behavior—and develop *skills* for use in cross-cultural situations. The message in these chapters is that the task of understanding culture is difficult but not impossible, and if you learn the basic principles, adopt a mindful approach, and are prepared to act as a culturally adaptive person, you can function effectively in a variety of cross-cultural settings. Moreover, it will be a rewarding experience for you.

The next four chapters apply the fundamentals of cultural intelligence to a number of common interpersonal challenges

in multicultural settings. By applying the principles outlined, you can be more effective in making decisions (chapter 4); communicating, negotiating, and resolving conflicts across cultures (chapter 5); leading and motivating others who are culturally different (chapter 6); and designing, managing, and contributing to multicultural groups and teams (chapter 7). In chapter 8 you will learn how cross-cultural understanding, mindfulness, and skills are acquired and can be developed by means of education, everyday experience, and foreign travel. Finally, we provide a bibliography of key sources for those wanting to explore cultural intelligence in more depth.

Kerr is a Scot who lives and works in New Zealand. Dave is a New Zealand citizen but was born and educated in the United States and now lives and works in Canada. As we write and teach about cultural diversity, we are constantly reminded of our own cultural backgrounds. While we both have extensive international experience and between us have lived and worked in ten different countries, we know that these backgrounds influence how we think and write. We have worked very hard to be objective in this regard, but we would be pleased to hear from readers who feel we have missed or misinterpreted things that are obvious to them from their cultural perspective.

With this book we have attempted to help readers understand and integrate cultural differences, to appreciate the wonderful diversity of our fellow human beings all around the world, and to help people everywhere become more knowledgeable, more attentive, and more skilled in their interactions with others. We sincerely believe that by developing cultural intelligence, we can all make the world a more productive and a happier place.

Dave Thomas   *Kerr Inkson*
Vancouver   *Auckland*

Living and Working in the Global Village

LET'S JUST TALK IT OUT

Bob Weber hangs up the telephone and leaps to his feet. Furious, he bounds out of his office in search of his Korean-born administrative assistant, Joanne Park. He has just been berated by his customer in Pennsylvania for not sending the contract for softwood lumber to him on the date specified. This exchange, plus the current volatility in the Canadian stock market, is really making him edgy. As he walks down the hall toward the employee lunchroom, he begins to calm down. He knows he must handle this situation with an employee carefully.

He arrives at the lunchroom and pokes his head in the door.

"Is Joanne here?" He sees her at a table, sharing her lunch with several other administrative staff. He still feels annoyed, but he keeps his voice in control.

"Oh, I see you are in here. I was looking for that contract to Zott Industries that I asked you to type. Did you forget?"

Everyone stops talking. They look uncomfortable. Joanne gets up from the table.

"Oh, Mr. Weber. I am so sorry! I will do it right this minute!"

"No, that's okay. After lunch is fine. But, we do need to get it out today." He goes out.

Joanne averts her eyes. She looks miserable. The other staff are looking at each other knowingly.

A few minutes later Bob is sitting behind his desk busily talking on the telephone. Joanne comes in briskly and delivers the contract (with two hands, typical of Korean culture) into Bob's in-box.

She then turns and goes out just as briskly and closes the door firmly but quietly behind her.

Bob ends his phone call, gets up from his desk, and follows Joanne into the hall. His anger has gone. After all, Joanne has never made such a mistake before. Now he is concerned for her.

"Joanne, can you come in here for a minute."

Joanne comes in obediently and stands in front of him with her head down, not making eye contact with Bob.

"Is there some sort of a problem here? If so, we need to talk about it."

There is no response from Joanne.

"Does it have something to do with forgetting to type the contract?"

Joanne nods. She still doesn't look at him.

He is conciliatory, friendly. "Oh! That was no big deal! It's done now. Just forget about it. But in the future just make sure and tell me if something is wrong so we can talk it out. Okay?"

Joanne nods again.

Over the next few weeks Joanne takes several days of sick leave, and three weeks later she resigns.

The actions and reactions of Bob Weber and Joanne Park reveal quite different outlooks on resolving a problem at the office. Like most Americans, Bob thinks the best way to resolve conflicts is to have a frank and open discussion about them and work through any differences. In contrast, Joanne's cultural background tells her that she will never be able to recover the status she had formerly enjoyed after being reprimanded in front of her peers. And being confronted again with her mistake by Bob in his office just added to her loss of face. Both Bob and Joanne continue to operate as if they were totally immersed among others of their own culture.

As a result, both Bob and Joanne endanger the things they value most: Bob, despite his good intentions, has failed to correct the cause of the administrative error and portray himself as a caring boss. And Joanne has left a job in a good organization that she generally enjoyed. If each had been willing and able to accommodate, at least in part, the other's customs and had made more effort to help the other to understand his or her own customs, Bob might have been able to create an efficient and friendly working environment, and Joanne might have learned some new ways of dealing with her new culture.

For example, Bob might have had some discussions with the other managers who have Korean staff and adjusted some of his managerial style and communication behavior. For her part, Joanne might have noted her own feelings and communicated to Bob how his behavior affected her.

The story of Bob Weber and Joanne Park is typical—it is a story that is enacted again and again in many situations around the world as ordinary people, working both within their own countries and overseas, grapple with the problem of relating to others who are from cultures where things are done differently.

Consider the following examples:

- A British company trying to run a Japanese subsidiary experiences inexplicable problems of morale and conflict with its Japanese workforce. This seems out of character with the usual politeness and teamwork of the Japanese. Later it is found that the British manager of the operation in Japan is not taken seriously because she is a woman.

- Two American managers meet with executives and engineers of a large Chinese electronics firm to present their idea for a joint venture. After several meetings, they notice that different engineers seem to be attending the meetings and that their questions are becoming more technical, so much so that the Americans have difficulty

answering them without giving away trade secrets. The Americans think this attempt to gain technological information is ridiculous. Don't the Chinese have any business ethics? How do they sleep at night? Later they learn that this is common practice and considered to be good business among the Chinese, who often suspect that westerners are interested only in exploiting a cheap labor market.

- In Malaysia, an old woman is struggling to unload some furniture from a cart and carry it into her house. The furniture is heavy, and she stumbles under the weight. Many people crowd the street, but no one makes an effort to offer help. A couple of young American tourists who are passing by see the problem, rush up, and start helping the old lady. The locals on the street seem bemused and perplexed by these Americans helping someone they don't even know.

- A Canadian manager faces difficulties because his five key subordinates are, respectively, French-Canadian, Indian, Italian-American, Chinese, and Iraqi. How can he treat them equitably? How can he find a managerial style that works with all of them? How should he chair meetings?

- A Dutch couple, an engineer and a teacher who have volunteered for two-year assignments in Sri Lanka to assist local economic development, spend an evening visiting a Sri Lankan couple to whom they have been introduced by a friend. They want to "get a feel for" the Sri Lankan people. Their hosts are gracious and hospitable but much more reserved than the Dutch couple are used to. The guests feel awkward and find it hard to make conversation. Later, they panic because of the ineptitude they felt in dealing with the Sri Lankans.[1]

These stories provide real-life examples of people from different parts of the world struggling with problems caused by intercultural differences. Do you identify with any of these

situations? Do you wonder how to deal with people from other countries, cultures, or ethnic groups? Have you been in situations, like the ones above, that have left you puzzled and frustrated because you simply haven't felt tuned in to the people you have been dealing with? If so, you are not alone; you are attempting to operate in a multicultural world.

The Global Village

There are seven billion people in the world from myriad different cultures, but we live in a village where events taking place ten thousand miles away seem as close as events happening in the next street. We find ourselves in this global village whenever we read a newspaper or watch television or buy a product from the grocery store shelf. We can watch a Middle East firefight as if we were there, eat tropical fruit with snow on the ground outside, and meet people from far-off exotic places at the local mall. The following dramatic examples of globalization are familiar to almost everyone.

THE GLOBAL WORLD COMES TO THE UNITED STATES

Americans' consciousness of the increasingly global society that they live in has been powerfully raised by what may turn out to be the two major crises of the first decade of the new millennium.

On September 11, 2001, the world came to America in a new and horrifying way. The young men who flew their hijacked airliners into the great U.S. citadels of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were citizens of the global village. They were operating in a world with a profoundly increased consciousness of difference—haves versus have-nots, Christians versus Muslims—as well as far fewer boundaries. To the terrorists, America was not a distant vision but an outrage beamed nightly into their homes through their televisions, a place they could visit personally for the price of a plane ticket. They slipped easily into the world's most powerful nation, acquired its language, were accepted by their neighbors, and took flying lessons from friendly, helpful locals. Most likely they

tuned in to U.S. television at night and paid special attention to the regular bulletins on conflict in the Middle East.

The news of the attacks traveled, virtually instantaneously, to all corners of the world. Californians stared aghast at the strange horrors of the day's breakfast show. Europeans interrupted their shopping to crowd around television screens in appliance store windows. Australians phoned each other in the night and said, "Switch your telly on." A billion viewers around the globe watched as the Twin Towers collapsed in front of their eyes.

After September 11, people struggled to understand. Who were these people who had plunged the world into crisis? Where were they from? What did they believe? What was it in the ever more complicated cause-and-effect kaleidoscope of global economics and politics that America had done to cause such bitter enmity among these terrorists and their supporters?

In October 2008 people around the world again watched in horror as the financial morass labeled by the term *subprime mortgages* quickly spread into their lives. Some of the biggest and apparently most impregnable financial institutions suddenly went out of business, crippled by multibillion-dollar debts. Flows of credit—the lifeblood of business—froze, stock markets plunged, and memories of the horrors of the Great Depression of the 1930s were revived. The president of the United States quickly called his top advisers together to put together a rescue package, and within a few days a $700 billion government "bailout" of stricken banks was announced—a de facto reversal of the country's most cherished principles of free-market capitalism.

Despite this intervention, however, the share markets continued to fall. And they fell not just in the United States but all around the world. Banks in many countries had to be bailed out by their governments. It seemed that the "toxic mortgages" that had started the problem had ended up being processed into various forms of "derivative" debt and exported all around the world. In addition, it turned out that the culture of lax bank regulation and incentivization of massive, unsustainable credit was not a particularly American problem but one shared and developed in concert with many other industrialized countries. So it was only when the world's leaders *all*

came together, in meetings of the G7 and G20 countries (meetings of the leading industrialized counties), and developed integrated *global* solutions to a global problem, that the bleeding stopped and markets around the world begun to stabilize. At the end of 2008, it was not just America but all countries that faced bleak economic times ahead.

After both of these events, people said, "The world will never be the same again." What they might rather have said: "The world has been changing rapidly for some time. These events have caused us to notice it."

These events can be understood only if one takes a global perspective. These matters are not just about New York or about America or about the Middle East and its relationship with America or about finance in the developed world. The forces involved are economic, political, legal, and cultural forces that cross international boundaries, create international problems, and require international solutions. We all see these things, and whether we like it or not, we are all involved. We are all citizens in a global world. And none of us can escape the fact.

Forces of Globalization

We are all living increasingly global lives. And we are beginning to see and understand the importance of the process known as globalization, particularly the way it affects the lives of people. Globalization means an increase in the permeability of traditional boundaries, not just those around business organizations but those around countries, economies, industries, and people.[2]

Globalization has accelerated by a host of factors in the international business environment, including the following:

- Increased international interconnectedness, as represented by trade agreements, the growth of international trade, the growth of multinational corporations, and the

ability to locate business, particularly manufacturing, wherever cost is lowest.

- The increased volume and importance of human migration, particularly from less-developed to more-developed countries. In many nations now a large percentage of inhabitants were born and brought up in other countries or are culturally influenced by their parents who were themselves immigrants.

- The ability of information and communication technology to transcend time and distance so that at the touch of a computer keyboard or a cell phone, we can be somewhere else, thousands of kilometers away, and participate in events and change outcomes there.

Until recently only a few very large multinational companies were concerned with foreign operations. Now, business extends across all manner of porous boundaries—some of which have become so porous they have almost ceased to exist—across the entire globe. Even very small firms now have the capability to be global: indeed, small and medium-sized organizations account for an ever-increasing share of global business.

Because of globalization, the environment of business is now more complex, more dynamic, more uncertain, and more competitive than ever before. And there is no evidence that these trends will reverse or decrease. Tomorrow's managers, even more than today's, will have to learn to compete, and to work, in a global world.

Globalization of People

However, globalization affects not only businesses and their managers but employees at all levels, as well as customers and indeed everyone in the general population. Inevitably, globalization brings about interactions and relationships between people who are culturally different. In business today, and

as tourists and members of families, networks, and communities that have "gone international," we travel overseas among people from other cultures, we speak with them on international telephone calls, and we correspond with them by e-mail. Even in our home cities, we notice that more and more of our colleagues, our clients, and even the people we pass in the street are observably from cultures different from our own. The trend is inexorable. This globalization of people creates a new and major challenge for everyone, especially those who work in business. Although we increasingly cross boundaries and surmount barriers to trade, migration, travel, and the exchange of information, cultural boundaries are not so easily bridged. Unlike legal, political, or economic aspects of the global environment, which are observable, culture is largely invisible. Therefore, culture is the aspect of the global context that is most often overlooked.

The potential problems are enormous. Even when people come from the same culture, interpersonal skills are often poor, and this weakness is costly to business. Where interpersonal interaction is taking place across cultural boundaries, the potential for misunderstanding and failure is compounded.

The conclusion is clear. Whether you are conscious of it or not, you are a member of the global community. This is true, even if you have never done business abroad or even traveled abroad. You may never have gone around the globe, but the globe has come to you. Any organization you work for will most likely buy or sell in another country, or will at least be influenced by global events. And you will increasingly have to interact with people from all parts of the globe right in your own home town.

Here is a story about two global people. One is an international migrant who is trying to create a new environment for himself in a very different place. The other is a manager who has never left her own country but now is confronted by an immigrant from a part of the globe she has never been to, coming into her office and sitting down in front of her.

In California, the human resource manager of a manufacturing company sits in her office. She 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 knocking. He does not look at the manager but walks to the nearest chair and, without waiting to be invited, sits down. He makes no eye contact with the manager but instead stares at the floor. The manager is appalled at such graceless behavior. Can't the man even say "Good morning"? 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 be appointed.

Observing this scene, most Americans and Western Europeans might think that the human resource manager has come too quickly to a conclusion about a candidate who may have the potential to be a good worker, but they would fully understand why she felt as she did. The man's behavior certainly seems odd and disrespectful.

But suppose we give the manager some new knowledge about the young man and his perspective on the interaction.

The young man is Samoan. He was born and brought up in Samoa and only recently immigrated to the United States. Samoans have great respect for authority, and the young man sees the manager as an important authority figure, deserving of considerable respect. In Samoa you do not speak to, or even make eye contact with, authority figures until they invite you to do so. You do not stand while they are sitting, because to do so would put you on a physically higher level than they are, implying serious disrespect. In other words, in terms of his own cultural background and training, the young man has behaved exactly as he should. The human resource manager in this case, if she herself were a job candidate, would greet her interviewer politely, make eye contact, offer a handshake, and wait to be invited to sit down. Therefore, she

tends to expect similar behavior of everyone she interviews. In doing so, she is not only being unfair to candidates who for various reasons operate differently, she is also reducing her (and her company's) opportunity to benefit and learn from people from different cultural backgrounds.

We are all different, yet all too often we expect everyone else to be like us. If they don't do things the way we would do them, we assume something is wrong with them. Why can't we think outside our little cultural rule books, accept and enjoy the wonderful diversity of humankind, and learn to work in harmony with others' ways?

In the cases we have provided so far, Bob Weber and Joanne Park and the human resource manager and the young Samoan man are playing a game that we all play. The game is called *Be Like Me*. Do it *my* way. Follow *my* rules. And, when the other party can't, or doesn't want to, the characters in our stories withdraw into baffled incomprehension.

We all tend to be like Bob and Joanne and the human resource manager and the young Samoan man. We all find cultural differences hard to deal with. We all tend to play *Be Like Me* with the people we live and work with.

Intercultural Failures

Many of us fail in intercultural situations is in all sorts of ways, such as the following:

- Being unaware of the key features and biases of our own culture. Remember that just as other cultures may seem odd to us, ours is odd to people from other cultures. For example, few Americans realize how noisy their natural extroversion and manner of conversation seem to those from most other cultures, many of which value reticence and modesty. By the same token, people from Asian societies, where long silences in conversations are consid-

ered normal and acceptable as participants reflect on the topic, do not realize how odd and intimidating silence in this situation seems to many Westerners.

- Feeling threatened or uneasy when interacting with people who are culturally different. We may work not to be prejudiced against people from other cultures, but we notice, usually with tiny internal feelings of apprehension, the physical characteristics of others that make them different from us. All of us find difference threatening to some extent.

- Being unable to understand or explain the behavior of others who are culturally different. When we use a *Be Like Me* approach to explaining the behavior of others, we are often wrong, because their behavior may not be based on the same goals or motives as ours.

- Being unable to transfer knowledge about one culture to another culture. Even people who have lots of travel experience in many different countries are often unable to use this experience to be more effective in each subsequent intercultural encounter.

- Not recognizing when our own cultural orientation is influencing our behavior. Much of our behavior is programmed by culture at a very deep level of consciousness, and we are often unaware of this influence. Behavior that is normal to us may seem abnormal or even bizarre to culturally different others.

- Being unable to adjust to living and working in another culture. Anyone who has lived in a foreign culture for six months or more can attest to the difficulty in adjustment. The severity of culture shock may vary, but it affects us all.

- Being unable to develop long-term interpersonal relationships with people from other cultures, because even if we learn how to understand them and communicate with them a little better, the effort of doing so puts us off trying to develop the relationships any further.

In all of these examples, stress and anxiety for all parties is increased, and the end result is often impaired performance, loss of potential satisfaction and personal growth, and, in organizations, lost business opportunities.

Ways of Overcoming Cultural Difference

If the above are the symptoms, what is the cure? How can we ordinary people acquire the ability to feel at home when dealing with those from other cultures, to know what to say and do, and to pursue business and other relationships with the same degree of relaxation and the same expectation of synergy and success that we experience in relationships with people from our own culture?

EXPECTING OTHERS TO ADAPT

One way of trying to deal with the problem is to stick to the *Be Like Me* policy and try to brazen it out. We can reason, particularly if we come from a dominating economy or culture such as the United States, that it is for us to set norms for behavior and for others to learn how to imitate us.

You may think there is something in this. First, a dominant culture may win in the end anyway.[3] For example, the English language is becoming the lingua franca of business and education, and is increasingly spoken in business and professional interactions all over Europe and large parts of Asia. Second, many people believe that different cultures are converging to a common norm, assisted by phenomena such as mass communication and the "McDonaldization" of consumption.[4] Eventually, they argue, the whole world will become like the United States anyway, and its citizens will think, talk, and act like people from the United States. Many cities around the world already mimic New York, with the same organizations, brands, and architectural and dress styles; why resist the process?

In fact, the evidence in favor of cultural convergence is

not compelling. Convergence is probably taking place only in superficial matters such as business procedures and consumer preferences.[5] Also, insisting that other people behave as we do robs us of the great gift of diversity and the novelty it brings in the form of new ways of thinking and working. Finally, anyone who plays *Be Like Me* overtly or excessively is behaving insensitively and will be perceived as insensitive by others. Under these circumstances, many opportunities will soon disappear.

UNDERSTANDING CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Can we solve the problem of cultural differences and seize the opportunity they create simply by learning what other cultures are like? Do we even know, in any organized way, what they are like?

Plenty of easily accessible information about other cultures is available. Cultural anthropologists have researched many of the cultures of the world, and cultural differences affecting specific fields such as education, health, and business have also been explored.[6] This information has been useful in establishing the behavior or cultural stereotypes of many national cultures, and it provides a starting point for anticipating culturally based behavior.

Understanding some of the key cultural differences between countries and how those differences affect behavior is an important first step on the way to gaining cultural intelligence. This book provides some basic information on these matters.

However, this basic knowledge is only the beginning of the process of changing cultural differences from a handicap to an asset. Even at their best, research on cultural difference and the sort of account that says, "Japanese behave in this way and Americans in that" can provide only a broad statement about cultural identity. Generalizations about a country are likely to conceal huge variances within that country and considerable subtlety in the way cultural differences are made apparent. A country may have, for example, religious or tribal

or ethnic differences, forms of special protocol, or regional variations.

The "laundry-list" approach to cross-cultural understanding attempts to provide each individual who is to have intercultural interactions with a list—"everything you need to know"—about the particular country. Such lists often attempt to detail not just what the key cultural characteristics of the country are but the regional or organizational variations, the expected behavior in that country, the detailed customs to be followed, the type of speech inflections to use, and expressions and actions that might be considered offensive, as well as functional information on matters such as living costs, health services, and education. Tourists and travelers can buy books of this type about most countries, and some companies preparing executives for an assignment to a foreign country take this approach to preparing prospective assignees and their families for the transition.

Laundry lists have their place, but they are cumbersome. They have to document every trait of every conceivable cultural variant, along with drills and routines to cater for each. For an expatriate, this kind of intensive preparation for a single destination may be highly appropriate, but for most of us our engagement with other cultures is a less intensive interaction with a variety of cultures. If we are traveling in, or entertaining visitors or interacting with immigrants from half a dozen countries, do we have to learn an elaborate laundry list for each one? If we are suddenly introduced to culturally different people without warning and have no laundry list readily available, how can we cope with the situation?

Furthermore, laundry lists tend to be rather dry and formal. The essence of culture is subtler, it is expressed in combination with the unique personality of each individual, and it is hard to express in print. Formal and abstract knowledge needs to be supplemented by and integrated with experience of the culture and interactions with its people. Learning facts about other cultures is not enough.

A third approach to the problem is to become culturally intelligent.[7]

Cultural intelligence means being skilled and flexible about understanding a culture, learning more about it from your ongoing interactions with it, and gradually reshaping your thinking to be more sympathetic to the culture and developing your behavior to be more skilled and appropriate when interacting with others from the culture. We must learn to be flexible enough to adapt to each new cultural situation that we face with knowledge and sensitivity.

Cultural intelligence consists of three parts.

- First, the culturally intelligent person requires *knowledge* of culture and of the fundamental principles of cross-cultural interactions. This means knowing what culture is, how cultures vary, and how culture affects behavior.

- Second, the culturally intelligent person needs to practice *mindfulness,* the ability to pay attention in a reflective and creative way to cues in the cross-cultural situations encountered and to one's own knowledge and feelings.

- Third, based on knowledge and mindfulness, the culturally intelligent person develops cross-cultural *skills* and becomes competent across a wide range of situations. These skills involve choosing the appropriate behavior from a well-developed repertoire of behaviors that are correct for different intercultural situations.

The model in figure 1.1 is a graphic representation of cultural intelligence.

Each element in figure 1.1 is interrelated with the others. As we describe in chapter 8, the process of becoming culturally intelligent involves a cycle or repetition in which each new challenge builds upon previous ones until cultural intelligence is ultimately achieved. A major advantage of this approach
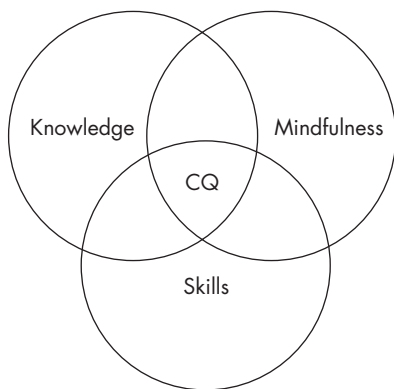
FIGURE 1.1.   Components of cultural intelligence (CQ)

over the laundry-list approach is that as well as acquiring growing competence in a specific culture you simultaneously acquire general cultural intelligence, making each new cultural challenge easier to face because of what has been learned from the previous ones.

You have probably heard of the psychologists' concept of intelligence, the ability to reason, and its measure, the intelligence quotient (IQ). More recently has come recognition of emotional intelligence, the concept that it is important how we handle our emotions. A measure of emotional intelligence is the emotional intelligence quotient (EQ). Cultural intelligence (or CQ as its measure might be called) is a relatively new idea that builds on these earlier concepts but that incorporates the capability to interact effectively across cultures.[8]

In the three chapters that follow, we present a road map for improving your cultural intelligence by addressing the three elements of cultural intelligence one by one.

In chapter 2 we examine the information base that provides the necessary background understanding of cultural phenomena. A secure *knowledge* of what culture is and what it is not;

of the depth, strength, and shared and systematic nature of culture; and of some of the main types of cultural difference provides a good basic set of tools to give one confidence in any cross-cultural situation.

In chapter 3 we consider how observation of the everyday behavior of people from different backgrounds—including our own behavior—can be useful in interpreting the frameworks of knowledge introduced in chapter 2. Most people operate interpersonally in a condition of "cruise control," in which their experiences are interpreted from the standpoint of their own culture. We develop the idea of *mindfulness*—a process of observing and reflecting that incorporates cross-cultural knowledge. Developing the habit and the techniques of mindfulness is a key means to improving cultural intelligence. We then outline the process through which knowledge and mindfulness lead to new skilled behavior. The *cross-cultural skills* associated with cultural intelligence are general skills that are derived from specific knowledge. By developing this repertoire of behavior, you can translate the understanding of culture into effective cross-cultural interactions. Finally in chapter 4 we show how you can develop a functioning cultural intelligence.

The concept of cultural intelligence as outlined in this book is not difficult to understand, but is hard to put into practice on an ongoing basis. It takes time and effort to develop a high CQ and the accompanying skills. Years of studying, observing, reflecting, and experimenting likely lie ahead before the learner develops truly skilled performance. Becoming culturally intelligent is substantially learning by doing, so it has useful outcomes beyond the development of skilled intercultural performance. In addition, new cultures are intriguing: learning how to live in them or work in them or interact with people who are from them can be fun and can open up wonderful possibilities of new insights, new relationships, and a new richness in your life. This book is the place to start on this journey.

Summary

This chapter describes the forces of globalization that are dramatically changing the environment for people around the globe. Those confronted by the phenomenon of cultural difference and diversity include not just global managers but all of us. In a sense we are all becoming global managers, for even those who stay in their own countries have to think in global terms. The essence of being global is interacting with people who are culturally different from ourselves. Culture is more difficult to deal with than other aspects of the environment, partly because much of culture operates invisibly. We know a great deal about how cultures around the world differ. However, this knowledge is only the beginning of the process of becoming culturally intelligent. Cultural intelligence involves understanding the fundamentals of intercultural interaction, developing a mindful approach to intercultural interactions, and finally building cross-cultural skills and a repertoire of behaviors so that one can be effective in any intercultural situation. Interacting effectively across cultures is now a fundamental requirement for all of us in today's global environment.

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