

DISCOVER

HOW TO THRIVE
IN
MULTICULTURAL ENVIRONMENTS



Mihaela Nica,
July 2020



Short guide for people who work and live in multicultural environments to help them develop their cultural intelligence and successfully interact with people from various cultural backgrounds.

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Quick Exercises

How often do you interact with people from other cultures, nationalities, etc?

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Once a quarter
- Never

How many countries have you visited?

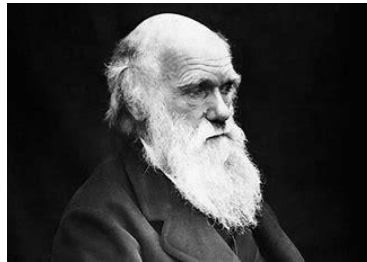
How did you feel on your first day of vacation in a country you have never been to before?





*“It is not the strongest of species that survives,
nor the most intelligent that survives.
It is the one that is the most adaptable to
change.”*

Charles Darwin





Why this guide?

Globalization and immigration has brought increased complexity and change into communities and workplace environment :

- ❖ **Interdependence:** between countries and people in those countries
- ❖ **Variety:** cultural diversity within countries has increased; in business environment - we have more discerning customers, more aggressive competitors, etc.
- ❖ **Ambiguity:** lack of clarity, information overload, reliability of information.
- ❖ **Flux:** “the only constant is change” ... “what worked yesterday may not work today”



Also, as humans,

**“we do not see the things as they are,
we see things as we are”**

(Anais Nin)

...and this sometimes challenge our ability to interact effectively with people from various cultures.





Purpose and Outlines

The purpose of this guide is to give you some **practical insights and tools** to be able to **successfully interact with people from different cultural backgrounds.**

It will help you to:

- ❖ Develop awareness of the influence of culture on behavior
- ❖ Develop familiarity with situations and issues people confront when working globally

and it will introduce you to frameworks and tools capable of increasing your effectiveness working in multicultural teams.

The topics this guide discuss are:

- ❖ What is **culture and cultural Intelligence**
 - ✓ Discuss various cultural definitions, theories, models, approaches
 - ✓ Cultural intelligence CQ concept
 - ✓ Exercise – testing your cultural intelligence (Individual exercise)
- ❖ **Challenges** of working and living in a multicultural environment
- ❖ **Benefits** of working and living in a multicultural environment
- ❖ **Setting yourself for success in a multicultural environment**



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Let's start!



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What is culture?

There are various definitions for culture:

✚ “The collective programming of the mind which distinguishes one group or category of people from another” ***G. Hofstede***

✚ “Culture consists of a shared, commonly held body of general beliefs and values that define the ‘shoulds’ and ‘oughts’ of life”
Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck

✚ “Culture is the set of assumptions and values that are shared by a group of people and that guide that group of people’s interactions with each other”

Lane et al.



Culture serves a purpose: It makes action and interaction more efficient and simpler and **provides an important source of social identity for its members**, as humans like to belong, to be part of something. And this provides a sense of security, too.

We are all simultaneously members of many cultures: national, regional, municipal, professional, gender, hobby, age, etc.



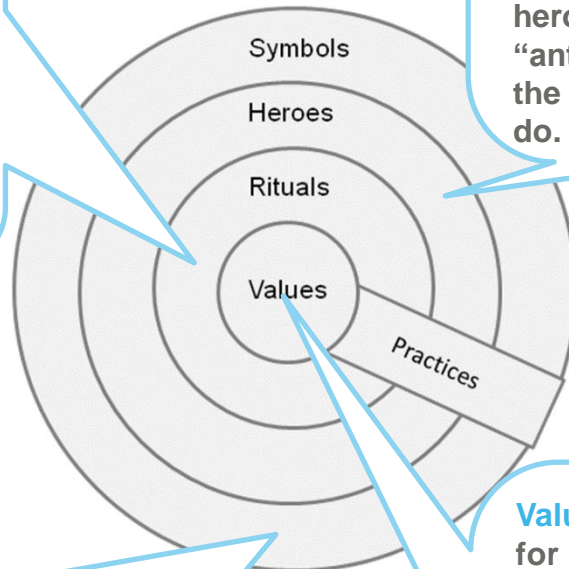
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What is culture?

There are various models to define a culture. One of the most popular is the **Onion model** developed by the Dutch psychologists and pioneer researcher on cross-cultural groups and organizations – **Geert Hofstede**

Rituals are recurring events which shape our unconscious minds. They exist both in society (e.g. celebrating Independence Day, Thanksgiving, tipping in restaurants, etc.) and in organizations (e.g. meeting practices etc.).

Heroes are people who have shown behavior which showcases the national spirit (e.g. real-life public figures, like statesmen, athletes, etc.). Or, within organizations, heroes show behavior that sets the example. In some cultures, heroes can also be the “anti-hero” - they can be the example of what not to do.

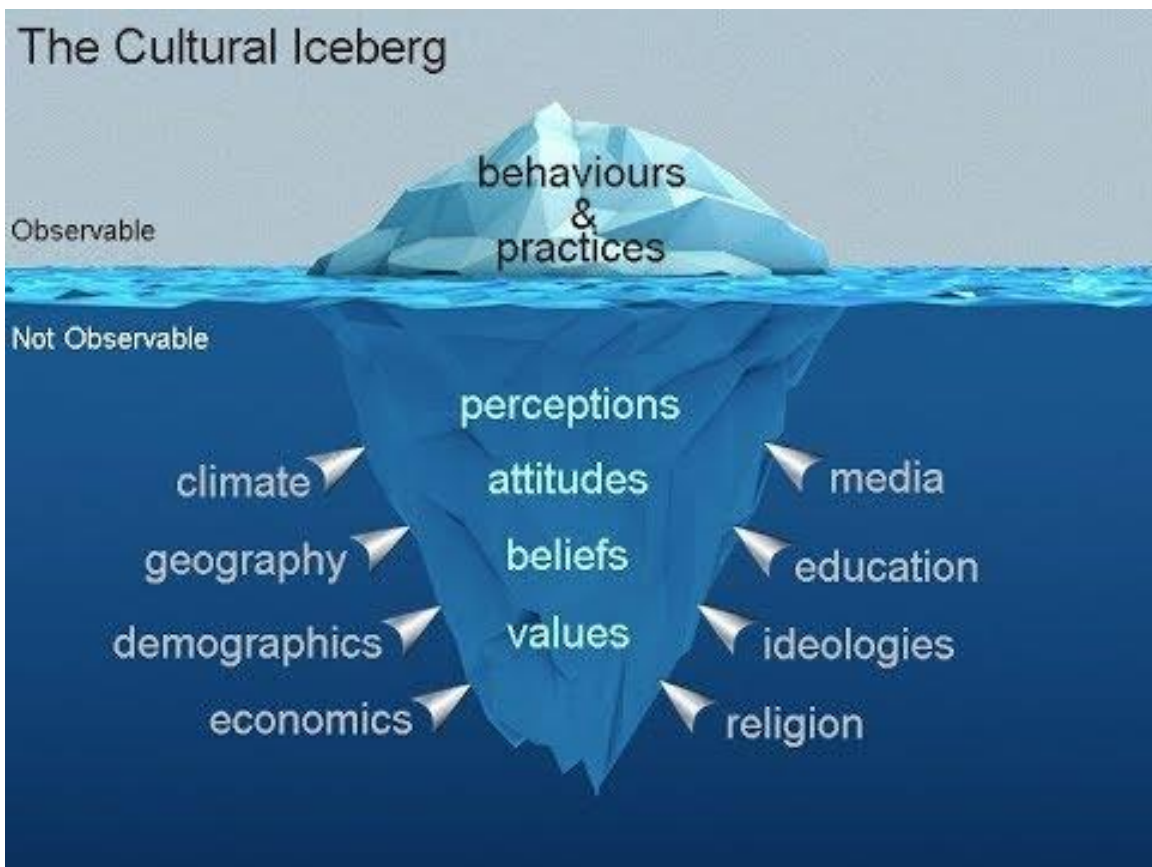


Symbols are items such as eating habits, foods, flags or colors. In the organizational setting, by symbols you might think about the logo of a company, for example. Symbols have emotions attached to them but changing the symbols usually doesn't have a long lasting deep emotional impact, as for example changing rituals might. Imagine having moved from one organization to another and facing a new way of conducting meetings

Values are broad preferences for a certain state of affairs (e.g. preferring equality over hierarchy). Values are transmitted by the environment in which we grow up, like the behavior of parents or teachers showing us what is acceptable and what isn't. Values are pretty much shaped by the time we hit 10-12 years of age.

What is culture?

Another model was developed by [Edward T. Hall](#) and is known as [Cultural Iceberg Model](#). The visible part of the iceberg is formed by behaviors and practices, while the deep core remain invisible and takes time and practice to discover it. And if you ignore it – you might get sink like the Titanic.....



Culture Map



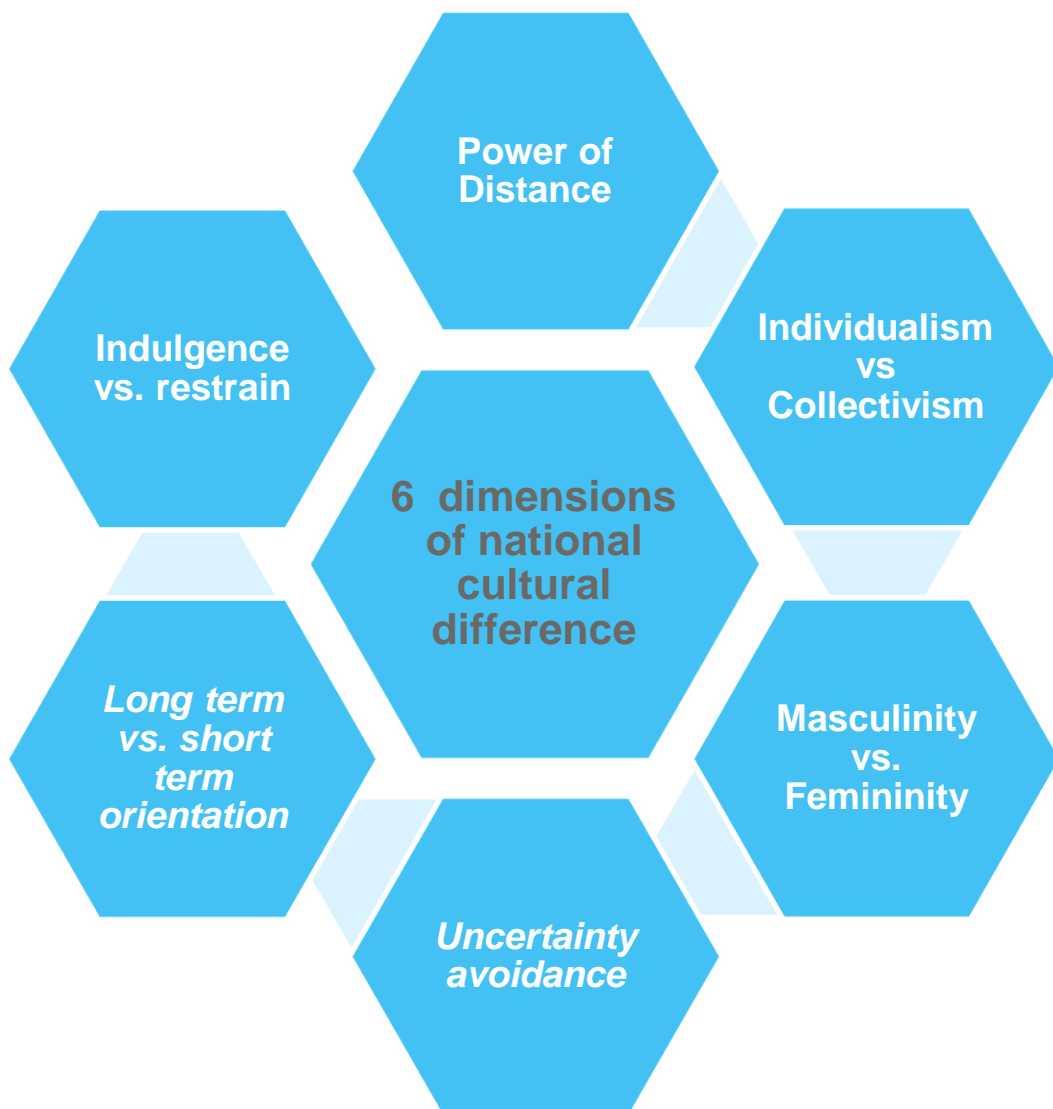
- ❖ A map is a tool for navigating a new territory
- ❖ A cultural map is a tool for navigating different cultures and particular cultural terrains
- ❖ Various cultural maps have been developed by scholars





Culture Map

One of the most influential culture map was developed by **Geert Hofstede**. This model define national cultures on 6 dimensions:



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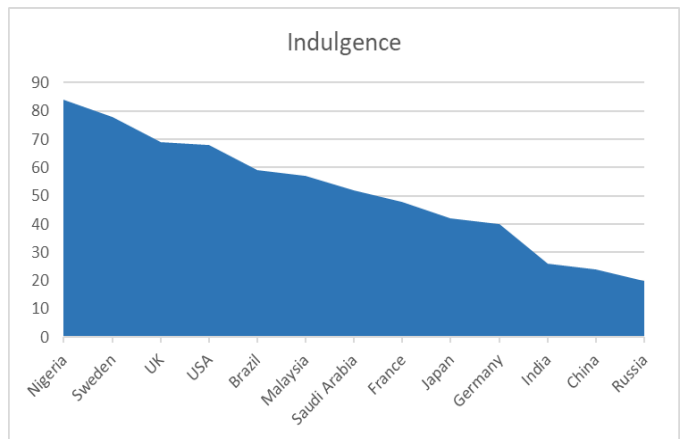
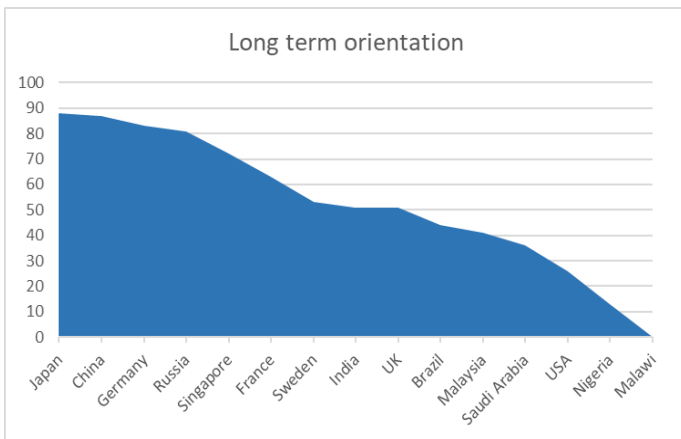
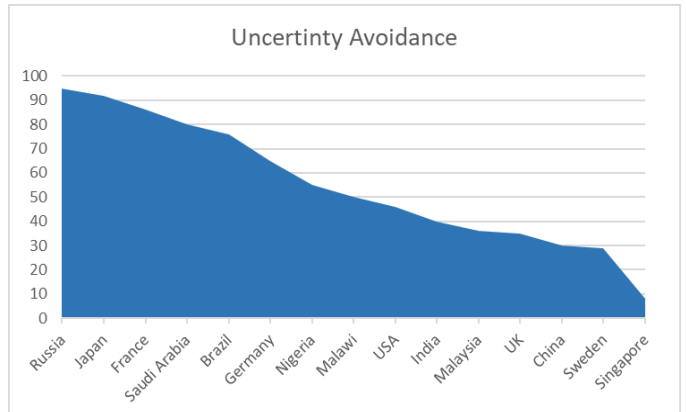
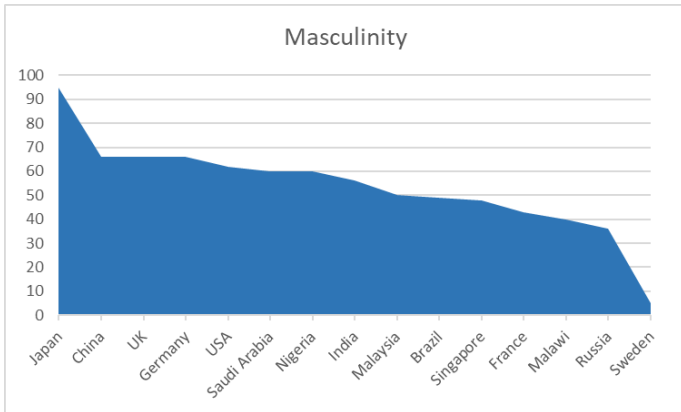
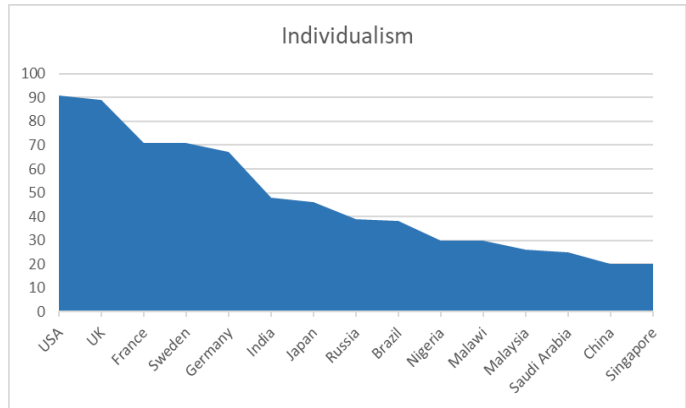
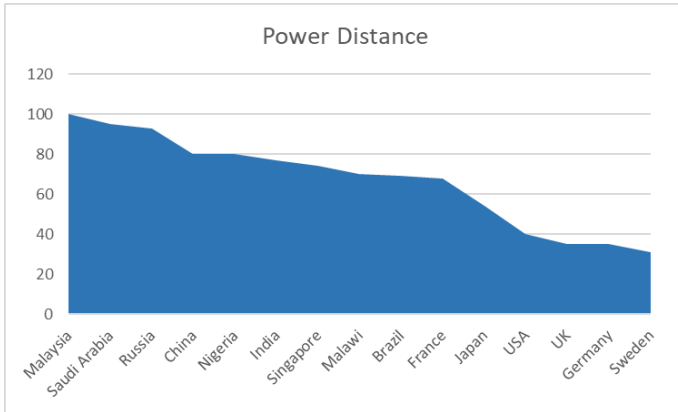
Culture Map

1. **Power distance**: the extent to which less powerful members of organizations (like the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. Acceptance of hierarchy or not.
2. **Individualism vs. collectivism**: the extent to which individuals are integrated into groups. On the individualist side, you find societies where ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after himself and his immediate family. On the collectivist side, you find societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong cohesive groups, often extended families.
3. **Masculinity vs. femininity**: the degree to which tough values like assertiveness, performance, success, and competition, which in nearly all societies are associated with men, prevail over tender values like quality of life, care for the weak, etc.
4. **Uncertainty avoidance**: degree to which people prefer structured over unstructured situations. Put differently, how well do people cope with ambiguity.
5. **Long term vs. short term orientation**: On the long-term side, you find values associated with the future, like thrift (savings) and persistence. On the short-term side, you find values associated with present and past, like respect for tradition and fulfilling social obligations.
6. **Indulgence vs. restraint**: This dimension refers to the degree of freedom that societal norms give to citizens in fulfilling their human desires. Indulgence is defined as "a society that allows relatively free gratification of basic and natural human desires related to enjoying life and having fun". Its counterpart is defined as "a society that controls gratification of needs and regulates it by means of strict social norms".



Culture Map

Some examples of cultural traits according to Hofstede model:





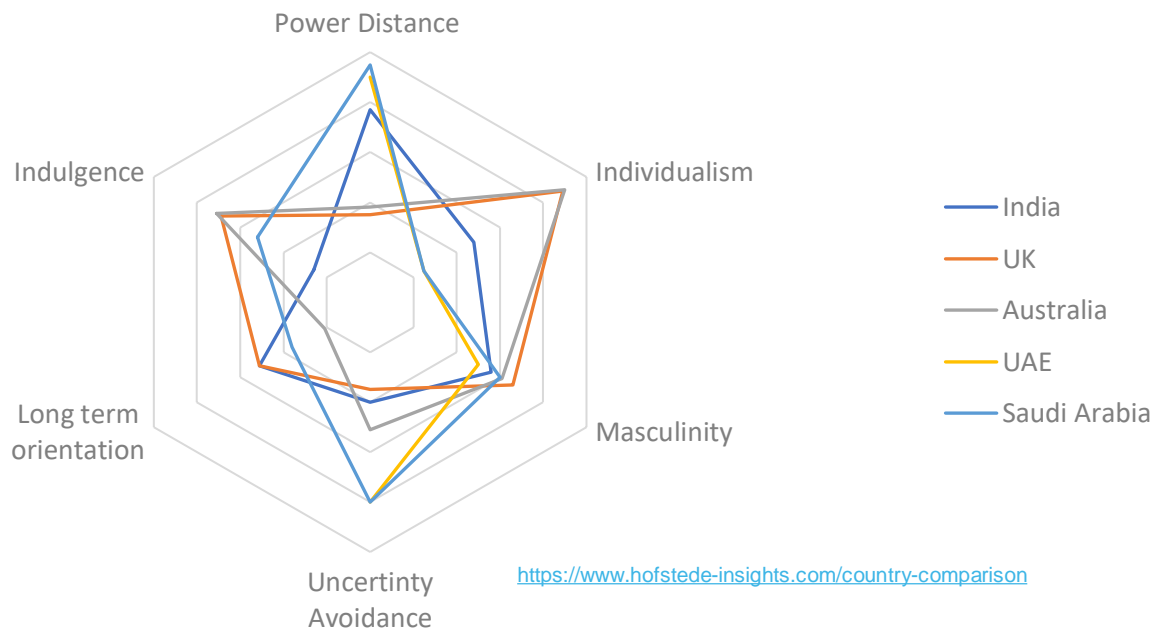
Culture comparison exercise

Consider the below cultures comparison graph.

- ❖ What cultural challenges might face an Indian who moved in UK?

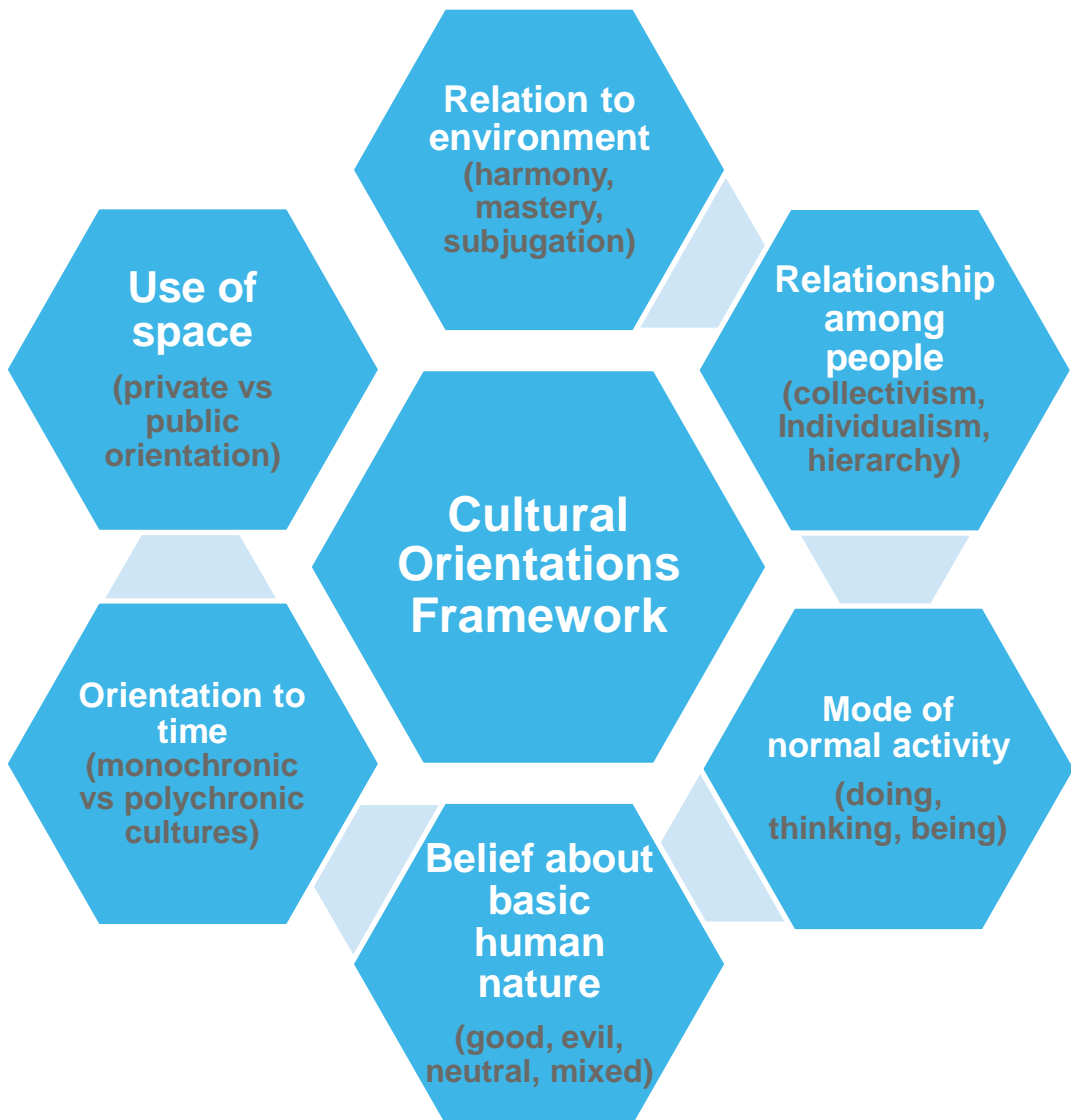
- ❖ What cultural challenges might face an Australian who moved in Middle East? (UAE, Saudi Arabia)

- ❖ How is the situation similar or different if these persons are men or women?



Culture Map

Another cultural model was developed by **Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck**. They elaborated the **Cultural Orientations Framework** which is based upon 6 issues that all societies throughout history face. The different responses to each issue are called variations.



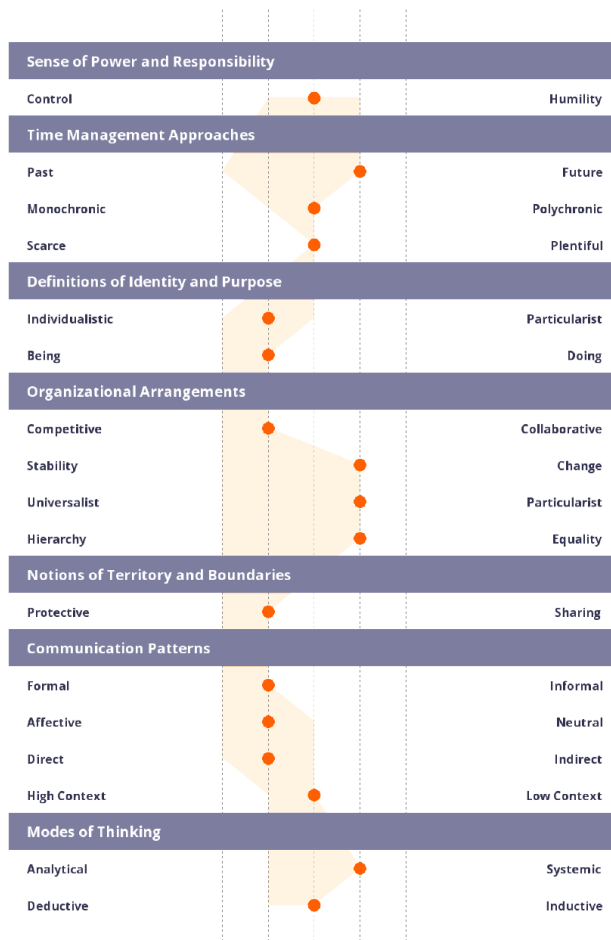
Prof. Philippe Rosinski developed another type of Cultural Orientation Framework (COF) that consider 7 dimensions (see below). His approach includes also an assessment tool to help people understand where they position themselves and how to navigate within a multicultural environment.

The assessment is free:

<https://philrosinski.com/cultural-orientations-framework-cof-assessment/>.

COF Evaluation

Example of assessment result





Culture Map

When we talk about **cultures maps**, we also need to admit they have some **limitations**:

- ✚ Individuals do not always conform to their cultures
- ✚ All individuals belong to multiple cultures and types of cultures simultaneously
- ✚ Cultures are much more complex than described through the variations
- ✚ Cultures are dynamic; they are not cut into stone

Cultural Intelligence (CQ)

Some definitions:

- ✚ “an outsider’s seemingly natural ability to interpret someone’s unfamiliar and ambiguous gestures the way that person’s compatriots would.” (P. C. Earley & E. Mosakowski, ‘Cultural intelligence’, HBR October 2004)
- ✚ “a person’s capability to function effectively in situations characterized by cultural diversity”
- ✚ Cultural intelligence is related to emotional intelligence, but it picks up where emotional intelligence leaves off.
- ✚ One critical element that cultural intelligence and emotional intelligence do share is,
“a propensity to suspend judgment—to think before acting.

D. Goleman



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Cultural Intelligence (CQ)

P.C. Early and E. Mosakowski defined **3 sources of cultural intelligence***:

- ❖ **Head** - Cognitive component - learning about beliefs, customs, taboos of foreign cultures
- ❖ **Body** - Physical component - actions and demeanor that disarm your foreign hosts, guests, or colleagues
- ❖ **Heart** - emotional component - dedication and perseverance in the face of challenges

Head, Body and Heart need to work together to be effective.

*P. C. Early & E. Mosakowski, 'Cultural intelligence', HBR October 2004

Cultural intelligence sometimes referred to as **cultural competency** is not treating everyone the same without acknowledging their unique cultural identity or about ignoring differences between people.

Cultural competency is the commitment of learning about your own and others' cultures, the ability to respect the beliefs, language, interpersonal styles and behaviors of people around you, the ability to avoid biases and stereotypes, the commitment to gaining new cultural experiences. In other words is a commitment to practice **cultural humility** and continuously self reflect and examine your own biases and stereotypes, acknowledging your limitations and keep open to learning more about others' culture, perspectives, etc.

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w3Z3jdubP4Y>





Exercise - testing your CQ

Cognitive component

Before I interact with people from a new culture, I ask myself what I hope to achieve	Your score
If I encounter something unexpected while working in a new culture, I use this experience to figure out new ways to approach <i>other</i> cultures in the future	Your score
I plan how I'm going to relate to people from a different culture before I meet them	Your score
When I come into a new cultural situation, I can immediately sense whether something is going well or something is wrong	Your score

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

Total _____ divided by 4 = cognitive cultural intelligence

Physical component

It's easy for me to change my body language (e.g. eye contact or posture) to suit people from a different culture	Your score
I can alter my expression when a cultural encounter requires it	Your score
I modify my speech style (e.g. accent or tone) to suit people from a different culture	Your score
I easily change the way I act when a cross cultural encounter seems to require it	Your score

Total _____ divided by 4 = physical cultural intelligence

Emotional component

I have confidence that I can deal with people from a different culture	Your score
I am certain that I can befriend people whose cultural backgrounds are different from mine	Your score
I can adapt to the lifestyle of a different culture with relative ease	Your score
I am confident that I can deal with a cultural situation that's unfamiliar	Your score

Total _____ divided by 4 = emotional cultural intelligence

*P. C. Early & E. Mosakowski, 'Cultural intelligence', HBR October 2004

Diagnosing your cultural intelligence

It is most useful to think about your 3 sources in comparison to one another. Generally, an average of less than 3 would indicate an area calling for improvement, while an average of greater than 4.5 reflects a true cultural intelligence strength.



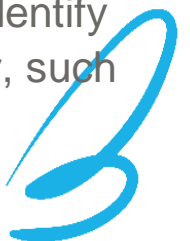


Challenges of working and living in a multicultural environment

- ✚ Direct vs. indirect communication
 - Western communication is typically direct and explicit vs. elsewhere
 - Westerners typically have difficulty understanding the indirect communication of non-Westerners
 - People from some culture might be less likely to let their voices be heard
- ✚ Trouble with accents and fluency
 - Non-fluent team members may well be the most expert on the team
 - Professional communication can be misinterpreted or difficult to understand across languages and cultures
- ✚ Attitudes towards hierarchy and authority
 - In the West, one tends to work with “flat” teams (i.e. little or no hierarchy but people coming from status cultures are often uncomfortable on flat teams)
- ✚ Conflicting norms for decision making
 - Quick decision making vs. taking time and reflection
 - Conflicting working styles across teams
- ✚ Prejudice or negative cultural stereotypes – that impact team members integration
- ✚ Navigating legislation: visa, laws, etc. might have specificity

“Even though the **challenges** of extensive intercultural contact are formidable, they **can be overcome if people understand the sources of cultural differences and understand a range of behavioral responses to deal with them.** If they learn to identify and work well with individuals who have good advice to offer, such as cultural informants and professional interpreters, they will increase their chances of success.”

Richard Brislin, author of Working with Cultural Differences





Benefits of working and living in a multicultural environment

✚ Inspire creativity and drive innovation

“cultural diversity in the workplace is a valuable commodity”¹

“managers who are bi-cultural or lived in more than one country score higher on creativity tests than those who have lived in one culture”²

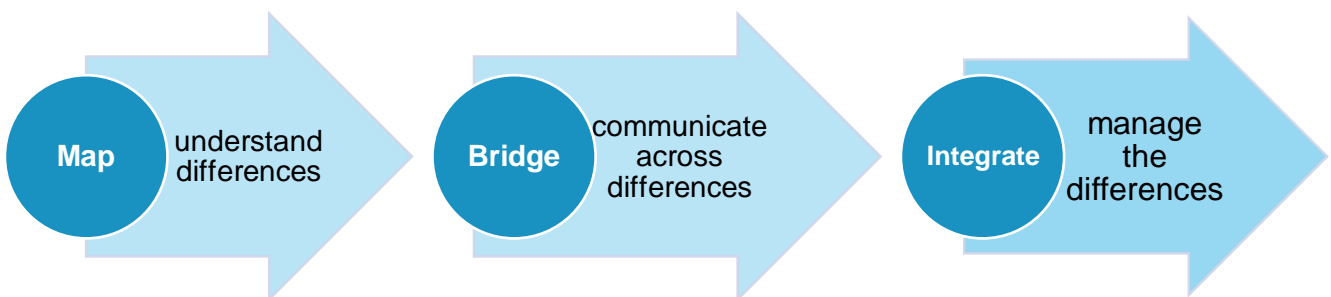
✚ **Local market knowledge**, cultural sensitivity and insights make businesses more competitive and profitable (products and services need to adapt to succeed overseas).

✚ Greater opportunities for personal and professional growth

Setting yourself for success in a multicultural environment

When is about culture we need to remember **2 basic, but critical facts**:

1. **Do not downplay cultural identity** - Identity becomes important to the extent that it is threatened
2. **Avoid ethnocentrism** - seeing “us” better than “them”
 - ✚ Know your own cultural orientation – where do you sit vis-à-vis of cultures definitions.
 - ✚ MBI model – Map/Bridge/Integrate (Maznevski and DiStefano)



Integrating leads directly to effectiveness, but Bridging accounts for more than two-thirds of the variance in Integrating.
Put differently, if Bridging is done well, Integrating almost follows naturally.





Setting yourself for success in a multicultural environment

Map

Understand the differences

- ✓ Describe different perspectives objectively
- ✓ COF
- ✓ Personality, gender, etc.

Bridge

Communicate across the differences

- ✓ Prepare with motivation and confidence
- ✓ De-center without blame
use Empathy ...
- ✓ Re-center to commonalities

Integrate

Manage the differences

- ✓ Generate participation
- ✓ Resolve conflicts
- ✓ Build on all ideas

When navigating the cultural minefield – consider **4 basic rules**:

- ✚ **Do not underestimate the challenge**
- ✚ **Apply multiple perspective**
- ✚ **Find the positive in others approaches**
- ✚ **Adjust and readjust your position**





Setting yourself for success in a multicultural environment

“The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but **those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn.**”

Alvin Toffler, Futurist





Setting yourself for success in a multicultural environment

Additional tips:

- ✚ Be flexible and open
- ✚ **Do not judge people**, value their work, and ensure fairness in the workplace focusing on people capabilities and skills
- ✚ **Listen before speaking**
- ✚ Convey sensitivity and respect for cultural differences.
- ✚ Do not impose your own set of values.
- ✚ Avoid arguments, use diplomatic words
- ✚ **Treat others as the they want to be treated**; find out what motivates each individual in your team/community and use that knowledge to engage them
- ✚ Time differences are not only about time zones....
- ✚ Find commonalities and passions to build relationships (e.g.: sports, music, hobbies, etc.)
- ✚ If conflicts occur between some team members, do not intervene too quickly. Rather observe how they handle conflict and offer constructive feedback.
- ✚ **Trust, honor, friendship, and respect are universal across all culture.**

By **leaving aside stereotypes** and **learning to decode behaviors** of other cultures along the maps, we can avoid giving and taking offense and **better capitalize on the strengths of increased diversity.**

Culture fluency is a muscle that need time to build and strengthen.

Stay humble, remain curious about learning diverse perspective and be willing to adapt.



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*“It is not the strongest of species that survives, nor the most intelligent that **survives**. It is the one that is **the most adaptable to change.**”*

Charles Darwin



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Thank you!

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