



WINDOW TO BGST NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2020



THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE TODAY

Mark Suredhran

We live in an inter-connected culturally diverse and vibrant world. What happens to one country can multiply rapidly to other countries due to the rapid flow of data and people from one place to another. Understanding and interpreting various cultures can be draining if not impossible at the frightening speed at which we have to process information and make decisions.

Traditionally, we trained cross-culturally to prepare ourselves for a particular country we were planning to go for a visit or for missions. Today, that model, while still helpful in a number of situations, may overwhelm us because of the diversity of cultures that are hitting us from around the world. Even if we do not go anywhere, the world has come to us, especially here in Singapore.

In my years of serving as a missionary as well as helping debrief missionaries back on furlough, I have come to realise that it is not enough to just prepare to engage the dominant culture of the receiving country.

We must prepare ourselves to work with members of a team from around the world in order to be effective. Many casualties of missions are not directly linked to the actual work of reaching the locals but the inability to serve together within a multi-cultural team.

Another phenomenon that has slipped in is the multi-generations working together. When I asked a healthcare professional about one challenge that he faced at work and without hesitation he said, "Intergenerational communications and their relationships at my workplace."

Other strains that we have to deal with are personality differences, personal preferences, maturity, lack of emotional quotient as well as misreading and reacting to the cultural values of others that differ to our own.

How do we best prepare ourselves and our family for the ever-present cultural mix we face in a highly globalised world today?

How do we better equip ourselves to engage a diverse workforce? How do we effectively then fulfil our calling to be light and salt to our world?

In this article, we shall deal specifically with Cultural Intelligence (CQ) and how by developing it we can better forge synergy at work for greater effectiveness and engage cultures not our own.

CULTURE

“Culture is a way of behaving, thinking, and reacting, but we do not see culture. We see manifestations of culture in particular objects (things made or used by people) and actions (what people do or say).” (Nida, 1986, p29)

We often react to behaviours of people around us before we dig in to find out why or where that behaviour is coming from. Our tendency is, “we judge ourselves by our intentions and others by their behaviour” (Covey, 2008, p52). This affects our reasoning and how we react. Understanding the effect of culture on an individual and in a given situation is a key starting point.

As an older Asian man leading an intergenerational, multi-cultural team of artists and musicians, I have had to learn that while some may dialogue more about a suggestion from me, others tend to take suggestions as decisions based on my

position and seniority. Silence from team members did not necessarily mean that they agreed but have respectfully kept quiet about their opinion. It took years to learn, but as a leader now, when I suggest something, I would make sure that they know when I am inviting dialogue and when a decision is being communicated.

Some years ago, my family and I were on missions for three years. The work we were in included reaching students from various parts of the world, mostly Asians, but my team mates were Singaporeans, Americans and Australians. The textbooks for preparing for our time in the mission field dealt mostly with how to reach another homogeneous culture. While some principles were great, most of my struggle was the inability to relate to multiple cultures at the same time, switching and adapting to people of different cultures within a day. It was quite draining and I was basically reacting to external stimuli and going with the flow, making many mistakes along the way. And I was not alone. Almost all of us struggle with not just different personalities, but understanding and responding to our cultural mix. Unconscious biases keep popping up and if these are not addressed, it could result in distancing and we drift to affinity groups/cliques or end up being isolated.

One particularly difficult incident that hit hard, came in the form of a misunderstanding between a Western couple and an Asian in the team. The

western couple expected a dialogue with verbal apologies, while the Asian mother felt that she had already settled it, by forgiving them in her heart, but without a verbal apology. Now, years after learning more about the role of culture, I realised I could have mediated this reconciliation better by highlighting the cultural value clash that was simmering below the surface. Asians generally come from a shame and honour culture where communications usually happen indirectly whereas western cultures tend to be verbal and direct in their approach. To apologise in front of everyone was shameful to the Asian. As the mediator, I knew no other way to approach the situation and 'forced' a western approach. I should have met them separately and explained that both wanted reconciliation. I could have highlighted the different cultural values present and we could have come up with a third way to resolve the conflict.

On another occasion, I was trying to sell my car before I returned to Singapore. A fellow American missionary friend and colleague was interested. I had a small car and I told my bigger built American that he should not buy over my car, that it was not the best fit for him and his family. He was greatly offended. I was bewildered and confused. I thought I was acting out of love by suggesting that he should consider a bigger car. He however said, "I think I am capable of making that decision for myself." Later on, he shared that in his country, someone who did what I did, sounded like a used car salesman with something to hide. We both laughed over it eventually when we clarified

that it was my Asian parental instincts that tripped me. I was doing it with good intention but it backfired. He thanked me for loving him and I thanked him for opening my eyes to a different cultural value than mine.

Conflicts dealing with deep seated values, cultural or otherwise, run deep and are sensitive. This is where a skill set such as Cultural Intelligence might come in handy.

I have found that cultivating CQ helps me navigate through multiple cultures in a day, whether I am talking to someone from America in the morning, India and Mongolia in the afternoon and finally to speak to my spouse and son at home. Maybe you are a Singaporean and only work with locals, but as long as there are people different from you, the principles still apply. In fact, the guards are down when we relate to our own nationalities and culture, but conflicts still arise because no two people are the same, differing in our upbringing and experiences.

SO, WHAT IS CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE?

"Cultural Intelligence is the capability to function effectively across national, ethnic and organisational cultures." (Livermore, 2009, p4)

CQ is more than cultural awareness and it involves four capabilities: CQ Drive, CQ Knowledge, CQ Strategy and CQ Action. Research has found that unlike personality traits and IQ, Cultural Intelligence can be developed. As such, one can grow in Cultural Intelligence to better adapt to others with different cultural values.

CQ Drive deals with the motivation and interest one has in engaging with other cultures. *CQ Knowledge* deals with our ability to dig deeper beyond behaviour to uncover beliefs and cultural values. *CQ Strategy* is the capability to be aware and plan the course of action. *CQ Action* is how we adjust and adapt to other cultures without losing our own cultural identity.

There are ten cultural values that can help profile an individual no matter where they are from around the world. This is a starting place for individuals and groups to appreciate their own cultural values as well as others'. Each cultural value comes paired together defining the opposite values within the spectrum. They are not right or wrong, but they highlight differences. The list here is a chart developed by The Cultural Intelligence Center:

Individualism: Emphasis on individual goals and individual rights

Collectivism: Emphasis on group goals and personal relationships

Low Power Distance: Emphasis on equality; shared decision making

High Power Distance: Emphasis on difference in status; superiors make decisions

Low Uncertainty Avoidance: Emphasis on flexibility and adaptability

High Uncertainty Avoidance: Emphasis on planning and predictability

Cooperative: Emphasis on collaboration, nurturing, and family

Competitive: Emphasis on competition, assertiveness and achievement

Short-Term: Emphasis on immediate outcomes (success now)

Long-Term: Emphasis on long term planning (success later)

Low Context/Direct: Emphasis on explicit communication (words)

High Context/Indirect: Emphasis on indirect communication (tone, context)

Being: Emphasis on quality of life

Doing: Emphasis on being busy and meeting goals

Universalism: Emphasis on rules; standards that apply to everyone

Particularism: Emphasis on specifics; unique standards based on relationships

Neutral/Non-Expressive: Emphasis on non-emotional communication; hiding feelings

Affective/Expressive: Emphasis on expressive communication; sharing feelings

Monochronic/Linear: Emphasis on one thing at a time; punctuality; work and personal life separate

Polychronic/Non-Linear: Emphasis on multitasking; interruptions ok; work and personal combined.

In these cultural values frameworks, those who were quiet and those who were more verbal in meetings may fall into the Low Context/Direct and High Context/Indirect communications. This is similar to the Western couple and the Asian mother conflict. My conflict with my American missionary colleague could be mainly because of the cultural value of *Universalism* on my part. I assumed what I value is true for all other cultures. Many times, the best place to develop our CQ is in the crucible of other cultures where we see our own values more clearly and help decipher the others.

I recently did a CQ Assessment with my work team. It was awesome to see each person's cultural values and the range where we all fit in as a team. It was interesting to note that there were significant differences to cultural values among Singaporeans and there were significant similarities with those from America and North East India. So, assumptions and stereo typing can trip us if we are not careful.

After this exercise, one staff managed to find the language to speak to another staff to clarify a misunderstanding for something that she earlier did not have the vocabulary to even broach the subject. This awareness is CQ knowledge and is the beginning steps we can take to celebrate our diversity while working towards adapting to one another. It helps to bridge and build respect and not get muddled into thinking that a conflict in these values are personal attacks.

Cultural challenges are not a new phenomenon. The Bible has a number of examples of culture-based conflicts where values set deep within a culture could derail the work of the Kingdom.

BIBLICAL VIEW

Early in the birth of the church the racial and cultural fault lines were already beginning to show. In Acts 6, a dispute over the Hellenistic Jewish widows who were overlooked in the daily serving of the food had to be dealt with. This bias by the native Hebrew Christians needed the attention of the apostles to help settle this racial conflict.

In Acts 15, the whole Jew/Gentile debate that led to the Jerusalem council is a case in point: the gospel we preach must not have racial or cultural divides but we must find meaningful adaptation in order to not breach the unity of the Spirit.

"For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall . . . that he might create in himself one new man in place of two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross . . ." Eph 2: 14,15b,16 (ESVi)

Jesus' death not only freed us from our sins but also broke the dividing racial wall so that from then on there is "no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus." Gal 3:28 (NLT)

Christ not only died so as to reconcile us with God, but also with one another and especially those who are different from us. If we do not acknowledge this, we are down playing what Christ had done on the cross for those around us and the world.

Many a misunderstanding have risen from miscues of cultural values and assumptions by well-meaning, devout believers who are unconsciously biased in their interpretation of Scriptures through their own cultural lenses or lenses handed down from our teachers.

After studying the scriptures in the historical and cultural context, even though we may do a good job translating principles over to our own culture, unfortunately we may universalise it to other cultures. It is good to suspend judgement until we have sought clarification and have heard the perspective of the other.

The Great Commission of our Lord in Matthew 28:18-20 directs us to “make disciples of all nations (ethnos).” So, we arm ourselves with not just the gospel entrusted to us but also by cultivating and developing our cultural intelligence to help us first understand our own cultural values and appreciate the cultural values of others in order to better present the message of Christ in a way that the nations will appreciate.

“For though I am free from all, I made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in

order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.” 1 Cor 9: 19-23 ESVi

The apostle Paul was well versed in the various cultures he was reaching. His message on Mars Hill to a mostly Gentile audience, had very different starting points than in the synagogues. Paul began, “Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship . . . as even as your own poets have said, ‘for we are indeed his offspring.’” He observed and studied their cultural artifacts and even their poets to bridge the gospel. Ultimately, he preached Christ crucified and resurrected, which should be the only offence to our sharing and not because of our conduct or wrong cultural cues:

“If people refuse to become followers of Jesus, we hope it will not be because we were obnoxious, reckless, sloppy, irresponsible, ill-prepared, or because we were well-meaning but badly informed. People’s lives are at stake.”- Duane Elmer. “Cross-Cultural Connections”

CONCLUSION

I have found my development of CQ greatly beneficial as I lead a diverse team at work or have a spiritual conversation with someone from another faith or culture. When diverse cultures effectively work together, I have found it produces a quality of work unlike a homogeneous team. So armed with this skill, we hope to harness the strength of diversity and better manage the challenges that come with multi-cultural and multi-generational teams.

CQ has enabled me to better understand and love others within the Body of Christ and reach out to others. It does not replace the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives but just like other skills we put in our bag, this is an essential capability venturing forward in the 21st Century, in helping fulfil the Great Commission.



Mark Suredhran

Mark is a certified Cultural Intelligence coach, has been in ministry with Cru Singapore for the past 35 years. His experience spans ministry among college students, the marketplace, as well as pioneering the music ministry, Forerunner. He worked in Victoria, Australia for 3 years, reaching international students and training staff there. He is now head of Crea, the creative arm of the ministry, which reaches out to artists and musicians.

References:

Covey, Stephen, R., and Merrill, Rebecca, R. *The SPEED of Trust: The One Thing That Changes Everything*, Free Press, New York. 2008.

Livermore, David. *Leading with Cultural Intelligence*, AMACOM, a division of American Management Association, 2009.

Nida, Eugene A. "Devils and Doubts." In *Customs and Cultures: Anthropology for Christian Missions*, 134-177. [9th W. Carey printing]. ed. Pasadena: W. Carey Library, 1986.

Check out our upcoming BGST workshop "Cultural Intelligence" with Mark Suredhran. More information and registration can be found at bit.ly/culturalintelligencebgst

Please register by 15th September in order for the assessment data to be interpreted.

GRIEF COUNSELLING USING NARRATIVE PRACTICES

2020

by Carolyn Markey



► COURSE BRIEF

Carolyn Markey addresses the difficult areas of grief and loss with practical helps based on Narrative Therapy concepts. Highlights include:

1. Discussing traditional ideas of grief and loss including the conventional assumptions of Grief Psychology contrasted with the ideas that shape Narrative Practices in addressing grief
2. Looking at how death is an end to a life but not necessarily a relationship - and re-membering a person with material from Barbara Myerhoff
3. Categories of Enquiry and group work will also be used in practice groups
4. Addressing cultural messages about loss and death will be discussed and how they interact with persons experiencing various forms and degrees of grief
5. Delving into the use of re-membering conversational maps, the absent but

implicit, definitional ceremonies with outsider-witness practices - all used and practiced within small groups

► DAY 1

- Ideas of Grief and Loss
- Conventional Assumptions of Grief Psychology
- Ideas that Shape Narrative Practice and Grief
- Death Ends a Life Not a Relationship
- Re-Membering (Barbara Myerhoff)
- Categories of Enquiry
- Group Work

► DAY 2

- Cultural Messages about Loss and Death
- Re-Membering Conversations Map
- The Absent But Implicit
- Definitional Ceremonies
- Outsider-Witness Practices
- Group Work

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FOR BGST STUDENTS
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9-10 Nov. 2020 · 9 am to 5 pm - ZOOM FORMAT



\$900.00 per participant

Contact: Andrew (9820-0904) / Ian (9830-8401)

WWW.THESELNETWORK.SG

INDIVIDUALS PERPETRATING VIOLENCE:

Narrative Approaches to Conversations with Men Who Use Violence in Families

30 Nov - 2 Dec, 2020

ZOOM FORMAT

9 AM - 5 PM

\$1200 PER PARTICIPANT

COURSE OUTLINE

Given the prevalence of family violence many practitioners who work with families across a broad range of concerns will invariably encounter issues of violence and abuse in families. This two-day workshop is designed for practitioners who are interested in exploring the contribution narrative therapy can make to their work with men who use violence and abuse in families. This workshop will equip participants with the following:

- An understanding of the ways narrative practices supports principles of safety, responsibility, accountability, respect and fairness when working with men who use violence and abuse in families;
- Knowledge of how the narrative metaphor and the intentions of rich story development can be applied to working with men who hurt people they care about;
- Considerations of the power relations of men's use of violence and abuse and the power relations of therapy;

• The opportunity to further develop therapeutic skills in conversations that invite men to explore:

1. What is important to him in his relationships with his partner and children
2. Naming and explanations for his use of violence that support the safety of his family
3. Increasingly detailed and accountable understandings of the effects of his violence
4. His personal agency in developing family relationships of safety and respect

Examples will be used to demonstrate these ideas and practices, and opportunities will be provided for participants to engage in skill development exercises as well as consider how these practices might complement their existing skills and know-how.

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*Show yourself in all respects
to be a model of good works,
and in your teaching show integrity,
dignity,...*

- Titus 2:7 -

HAPPY TEACHERS DAY!



CONGRATULATIONS REV DR EDWIN TAY

on your appointment as Principal of Trinity Theological College!

Edwin Tay is an alumnus of the Biblical Graduate School of Theology (BGST) where he graduated with a Masters in Christian Studies. On completion of his PhD at the University of Edinburgh, he served as Lecturer in Systematic and Historical Theology at BGST.

From everyone at BGST, we wish you all the best and may the Lord continue to use you mightily for His kingdom purposes!



2020

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

WORKSHOP: HUMAN FLOURISHING SERIES

19
SEP

"THE ART OF PRAYER"

Speaker: Mr Anthony Siow

10:00am-12:00pm

bit.ly/theartofprayer

SEPTET SERVICE (EVERY 4TH FRI)

24
SEP

12:30pm-1:00pm

Join Us on Zoom

Meeting ID: 823 1892 4126

Password: 782730

WORKSHOP: HUMAN FLOURISHING SERIES

26
SEP

"CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE"

Speaker: Mr Mark Suredhran

10:00am-12:00pm

bit.ly/culturalintelligencebgst

WEBINAR: FLOURISHING @WORK

25
SEP

"WORK INTERRUPTED"

3 ENGAGING ONLINE WEBINARS

9, 23
OCT

Speaker: Anthony Siow, Jeremy Gwee,

Michael Low, Tan Seng Kong

7:45pm-9:45pm

bit.ly/workinterruptedseries

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FACULTY SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS (SEP-OCT)



DR LAI PAK WAH	18 Oct	Mandarin Sermon	Mt Carmel B-P Church
	25 Oct	Sermon	Hebron B-P Church



DR KWA KIEM KIOK	13 Sep	James 3:13-18	Singapore Life Church
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MR LEOW WEN PIN	28 Sep	The Ekklesia of God	Continua
	18 Oct	Disability in Missions	Bethany Evangelical Free Church



MR QUEK TZE-MING	19-20 Sep	Judgment on the Beasts (Rev 19:11-21)	Bible Church Services
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