ANTECEDENTS OF CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE OF UNIVERSITY FACULTY AND STAFF: IDENTIFYING DIRECTIONS FOR CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE DEVELOPMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This study tested the cultural intelligence (CQ) of 306 university employees using the 20-item Cultural Intelligence (CQ) scale (Van Dyne, Ang, and Koh, 2008) at a small private university located in the Pacific Northwest. Our study yielded yet another confirmation of the statistical reliability of the Cultural Intelligence (CQ) scale and of its subscales. Consistently with our hypotheses younger (≤46 years old) employees demonstrated higher cultural intelligence compared to their senior co-workers. Likewise, the data supports the view that employees who frequently and closely interact with the diverse populations of students had higher cultural intelligence levels compared to the employees who maintain limited contact with the students.

Keywords: *cultural intelligence (CQ), higher education, age cohorts, experience-based cultural intelligence development.*

INTRODUCTION

The pressing need to make American universities better prepared for dealing with a greater degree of diversity on their campuses stems from both within the increasingly diverse American society and from the growing demand for high-quality college education that comes from the scores of prospective international students. In the college context, the challenge of diversity, which is generally defined as exposure to multiple frames of reference and opinions, usually presents itself through the needs of ethnically and culturally diverse student populations (Judkins and LaHurd, 1999). Indeed, the U.S. Census of 2020 documented a historical shift in the composition of the American population: the share of children who were born to racial and ethnic minorities for the first time exceeded 50 percent (United States Census Bureau, 2020). The changing demographics of American society also sends a signal that higher education institutions need to become more culturally savvy to effectively attract and better serve multicultural student populations. As Kenneth Johnson, a senior demographer at the Carsey Institute pointed out, this coming change would represent an opportunity for more Americans to embrace diversity while children and educational institutions will be in the vanguard of this change (Siek and Sterling, 2012). At the same time as the number of young American citizens

who bring more varied cultural traditions to the campuses continues to increase, the number of international students admitted to American campuses also climbs as the dangers of COVID-19 pandemic subside.

The resulting presence of a more diverse and multicultural population of students is already felt at schools and at universities. As Triandis (2006) states, cultural differences might stem from a variety of distinctions, including language, ethnicity, religion, politics, social class, and many other attributes. He further notes that, without knowledge of other cultures and without intercultural experience, all humans are ethnocentric and unable to effectively build relationships with people from other cultures that they will encounter in the globalized workplace. Cross-cultural tensions between various stakeholder groups are inevitable in the process and successful resolution of those requires "…ongoing development of skills in cross-cultural collaboration that enable appreciation of respective partner challenges, the negotiation of effective outcomes, the shifting of traditional mind-sets to embrace a broader stakeholder culture, and the operationalizing of agreed ways forward" (Bolton and Nie, 2010, pp. 702-703). DiTomasio et al. (1998) echo this opinion by stating that "success in the global economy requires cultural competence with diverse populations of employees, customers, and other stakeholders and an understanding of competitors (p. 5)."

Universities' admissions programs aimed at diversifying the student body represent only one facet of the efforts required to manage diversity on campus and would be insufficient if they are not integrated with a range of other efforts (Crawley and Crawley, 2009). Facing the rising tide of multiculturalism on campuses, American universities' will have to invest into developing their intercultural capabilities at the organizational level to successfully appeal to and work with more culturally diverse populations.

Although this study uses the data from the United States and strives to make contributions that primarily apply to American universities, the trend described above is not unique to the United States. Globalization and diversity of resident populations are common factors across many regions of the world. Academic researchers and administrators from countries ranging from Australia (Bolton and Nie, 2010; Marginson, 2000) to China (Wang, 2013) proclaim the imperative for their schools to rethink and rework their administrative practices, curricula, and pedagogies in light of the ongoing internalization of higher education. To facilitate their preparedness for working with culturally diverse populations, universities need both a solid theoretical foundation for designing their intercultural training programs and a reliable measurement instrument for monitoring their progress.

While embracing diversity generally provides a rich payoff for organizations in the form of increased productivity, creativity, and overall financial performance (e.g., Giambatista and Bhappu, 2010; Nielsen, and Nielsen, 2013; Barta, Kleiner, and Neumann, 2012), lack of organizational preparedness for increased cultural diversity presents significant obstacles to reaching organization's objectives (Jehn and Mannix, 2001; Jehn, Northcraft, and Neale, 1999; Chua, 2013; Giambatista and Bhappu, 2010). Diversity within organizations by itself does not guarantee productive interaction and collaboration between members. For instance, a large-scale study of diverse student populations (Carey et. al, 2022) has shown that cross-race and cross-class interactions were happening less frequently than expected, and students experienced less

satisfaction and perspective-taking in cross-race and cross-class interactions compared to same-race and same-class interactions. However, cross-group interaction that took place did predict better academic performance for the underrepresented racial groups and for the students from lower social economic group backgrounds (Carey et. al, 2022). This suggests that simply increasing the diversity of organizations is not enough. Fostering cross-group communication and collaboration is needed to create an inclusive climate within organizations. Development of employees' cultural intelligence (CQ) capabilities might provide a "golden key" to achieving this result. Empirical research provides evidence of a positive relationship between employees' cultural intelligence (CQ) and performance. For example, Fujimoto and Presbitero (2020) have demonstrated a positive relationship between perceived supervisor CQ and intercultural cooperation within an organization. Zhang et al. (2022) found evidence of positive effects of CQ on knowledge management in multinational corporations.

Despite the widely acknowledged importance of developing intercultural competence for ensuring universities' ongoing success, research on preparing university staff, faculty, and other higher education stakeholders for performing their duties in the increasingly culturally diverse world is still relatively scarce.

This study strives to make a contribution by investigating the influencing factors as well as consequences of developing intercultural competence by the faculty and staff members of a small private university in the Northwest of the United States. We use the Cultural Intelligence framework (Earley & Ang, 2003) as the theoretical foundation for our study.

CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE (CQ)

Cultural intelligence is defined as "an individual's capability to function and manage effectively in culturally diverse settings" (Ang and VanDyne, 2008, p. 3). Cultural intelligence (CQ) is conceptualized as one of the aspects of general intelligence, along with emotional intelligence (Mayer and Salovey, 1993) and social intelligence (Thorndike and Stein, 1937). Cultural intelligence is not a personality trait (although certain personality traits were shown to be the precursors of higher cultural intelligence), but a skill that can be developed by any psychologically healthy adult who has the motivation and the opportunity to learn (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008). Comparing CQ to the other constructs related to individual intercultural capabilities, Ang & Van Dyne (2008) point out that CQ stands out as a "cleaner" construct which is grounded in multiple intelligence theories and consistently conceptualizes cultural intelligence as a set of capabilities, while many other measurement instruments mix ability and non-ability characteristics. The cultural intelligence approach to intercultural training on campus has the advantage of starting with a comprehensive assessment of an individual's intercultural strengths and weaknesses and allows for designing a training program that will address this individual's intercultural weaknesses while playing off their strengths (Earley, Ang, and Tan, 2006).

Cultural intelligence (CQ) can be analyzed along four dimensions: meta-cognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral. According to Ang and Van Dyne (2008), metacognitive CQ reflects the mental capability to acquire and understand cultural knowledge. Cognitive CQ reflects general knowledge about cultures and cultural practices. Motivational CQ reflects

individual capacity to direct energy toward learning about and functioning in cross-cultural situations. Behavioral CQ reflects a person's ability to acquire and use news interaction skills that are needed in a new culture (Ang and Van Dyne, 2008, p. 3).

As we pointed out earlier, one of the distinguishing characteristics of the Cultural Intelligence framework is that it views CQ not as a personality trait but rather as a capability that is developed over time and can be improved with experience and education. This experience-based view of CQ suggests that experience, rather than age, would be associated with greater cultural intelligence.

Even though it appears that with age, individuals have a chance to develop greater cultural intelligence, making age an antecedent of cultural intelligence (Ang and Van Dyne, 2008), this study seeks to explore the possibility of the generational effects that might modify or even counter the effect of age on cultural intelligence. Specifically, we propose that older age does not automatically translate into greater individual cultural intelligence. Rather, the accumulation of intercultural skills will occur only if an individual has a motivation and an opportunity (through frequent and prolonged contact) to interact with the representatives of other cultures. Development of cultural intelligence, as discussed earlier, requires the accumulation of specific knowledge and skills as well as the development of a specific mindset. Earley and Mosakowski (2004) called it the "…interaction of head, heart, and body (p. 142)." "Head" means not just the accumulation of factual knowledge about the beliefs and customs of foreign cultures but also the development of effective learning strategies for dealing with every new culture that an individual encounters (Earley & Mosakowski, 2004). "Body" means that a culturally savvy individual has a repertoire of behaviors, actions, and demeanor that will allow them to develop a good rapport with the representatives of a different culture. Finally, "heart" means that an interculturally competent individual will believe in their own efficacy of dealing with foreign cultures and maintain a high level of enthusiasm and motivation to apply their cultural knowledge to action even despite the possible setbacks and temporary failures (Earley & Mosakowski, 2004).

Segmentation by age cohorts has been a popular way to study consumers for decades. The concept of an age cohort is based on the assumption that attitudes and behaviors of all people born over the same period of time will be shaped by the same "big events." Major economic booms and recessions, milestone events such as the astronauts landing on the Moon, the Vietnam War, the "hippy era" etc. are viewed as such cohort-shaping events.

We reasoned that although a more advanced age generally provides greater opportunities to acquire more knowledge and develop greater social intelligence, a more advanced age does not automatically translate into greater cultural intelligence. As American society becomes more racially and culturally diverse and as the acceptance of multiculturalism becomes more mainstream, younger people whose period of socialization occurred during these more recent "multicultural" years actually may have a greater chance to develop their capability to deal with intercultural situations relative to older age cohorts. Younger people may be likely to be more motivated to become culturally competent because they found themselves interacting with the people from other racial and ethnic groups during their formative years and envisioned the

practical need for developing intercultural capabilities (hence, being motivated to develop their intercultural skills).

H1: Younger respondents will score higher on cultural intelligence compared to the older respondents.

Young adults typically are at the leading edge of social change and are interested in the world, how it works, and their place in it (Bonnie, Stroud, and Breiner, 2014) They also generally display more accepting attitudes than their elders toward cultural behavioral norms that are different than their own (Mintz, 2021).

We reason that cultural experience might be developed not only with age but with greater exposure to intercultural interactions, through the process of experiential learning. Kolb (1984) defined experiential learning as the process of creating knowledge through the transformation of experience. Upon the completion of an individual's formal education, experiential learning often becomes the dominant source of learning of social skills such as CQ. In fact, Morrison and Brantner (1992) estimate that experience accounts for up to 70 percent of individual development. Work environments, such as in higher education, provide broad opportunities for social interactions and, therefore, for experiential learning. A number of studies (Li et al., 2013; Mosakowski et al., 2013; Gupta et al., 2013) provide evidence of essentially spontaneous development of cross-cultural capabilities as a result of exposure to cross-cultural situations (e.g., working overseas as an expatriate manager). Dealing with more diverse social contacts as well as with people from different ethnic backgrounds likely produces both the context and the incentive to develop one's intercultural capabilities.

Low ethnic and racial diversity is prevalent in the community where our study was conducted. The student body of the university where our data were collected is more diverse than the general population in the area. Hence, we reason that the employees who closely and frequently interact with the students as part of their daily duties at work will have a better chance to enhance their cultural intelligence, compared to the employees who mostly interact with the other employees and with the surrounding community. We set the formal hypothesis:

H2: Employees who frequently and closely interact with the students will have higher cultural intelligence scores compared to the employees who maintain limited contact with the students.

Earley and Peterson (2004) explain that a 'broad foundation of knowledge about cultures and societies…covering topics such as economic systems, religious, and political institutions, social relationships, and so forth" needs to be in place to allow for the effective interpretation of intercultural situations and for acquiring CQ-related cognitive skills.

As an additional research objective, this study seeks to explore the reliability of CQ Scale (Van Dyne, Ang, and Koh, 2008) when used specifically for assessing the employees' cultural intelligence at a higher education institution.

RQ1: Does CQ Scale generate acceptable levels of statistical reliability and is it suitable for assessing employees' levels of cultural intelligence at a higher education institution?

METHODOLOGY

Participants and Procedure

The data were collected in a small religiously affiliated private university in the Pacific Northwest of the United States. The data collection for this study was done using the opportunity to "piggyback" on a university-wide campus climate survey. An invitation to participate in the online campus climate survey was sent to the staff and faculty via a university-wide e-mail. The questions pertaining to this study were presented to the participants along with a range of unrelated questions gauging respondents' attitudes to university policies, university mission, as well as measuring the perception of the overall psychological climate on campus. Due to the large number of questions, it was unlikely that the respondents could guess the hypotheses and the purpose of this survey. The participants had to follow the link to the third-party website where they could answer the questions of the online survey at any time during the week-long data collection timeframe. To maximize the response rate, the organizers of the survey, including one of the co-authors, sent two reminder e-mails urging the faculty and staff to participate. The incentive to participate was a chance to win an iPad. The response rate in this survey was 56 percent which resulted in 306 usable surveys.

The respondents could opt out of answering any of the questions of the survey which resulted in the varying sample size for each measured variable. On average, for each of the demographic variables reported below, between 8 percent and 10.5 percent of respondents did not give an answer: different people skipped different questions. However, the percent of missing data remained fairly consistent across the whole range of demographic questions. The percentages reported in Table 1 were calculated with the exclusion of the missing data.

The information about age, function performed at work (e.g., academic, administrative staff, etc.), number of years employed by the university, gender, race/ethnicity, and education was collected from the participants. The respondents' term of service at the university ranged from 1 month to 35 years, with the average of 9.1 years. The other measured characteristics of the sample are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the sample

Demographic variable	Number of respondents	Percentages
Gender		
Female	195	63.7
Male	82	26.8
Age		
25 and under	8	2.8
25-35	62	22.1
36-46	71	25.4
47-65	127	45.4
66 and older	12	4.3
Race		
White	248	90.5
Multiracial	14	5.1
Hispanic/Latino	4	1.5
Asian	4	1.5
American Indian	2	.7
African American	2	.7
Education		
High school or less	10	3.6
Some college	34	12.1
Associate degree	19	6.8
Bachelor's degree	103	36.8
Graduate or postgraduate degree	114	40.7
Disability status		
Not disabled	264	95.3
Disabled	13	4.7
Sexual orientation		
Heterosexual	271	97.1
LGBT	8	2.6
Religion		
Catholic	97	36.3
Protestant	59	22.1
Other Christian	49	18.4
Buddhist	3	1.1
Latter Day Saints (LDS)	2	.7
Jewish	1	.4
No organized religion	36	13.5
Atheist or agnostic	20	7.4

Women comprised the majority of the respondents (63.7 percent, see Table 1). While racial diversity was not a characteristic trait of our sample (90.5 percent of respondents described themselves as Caucasian), cultural diversity of our respondents likely stemmed from the variety

of the religious traditions they were adhering to as well as from the differences in their education, sexual orientation, and life experiences (e.g., age range).

Table 2 breaks down the participants by their job status (managerial vs. non-managerial positions) and by the type of the work they performed for the university.

Table 2: Work-related characteristics of the sample

Job status		
Managerial positions (manager, director, or supervisor)	93	33.6
Non-managerial positions	184	66.4
University divisions		
Administration, planning & finance	94	35.7
Academics	80	30.3
Student life	46	17.4
Athletics	14	5.3

The 20-item CQ scale (Van Dyne, Ang, and Koh, 2008) was used to assess the respondents' ability to manage cross-cultural situations in their personal and professional lives. The scale consists of four subscales: metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral, corresponding to the four dimensions of cultural intelligence.

RESULTS

Reliability of Measures

All subscales of the CQ Scale have demonstrated sufficient reliability in our sample. Cronbach alphas for all subscales exceeded the generally recommended minimum level of .7 (Nunnally, 1978). The means, standard deviations, and Cronbach alpha coefficients for each subscale and for the composite CQ scale are reported in Table 3.

Table 3: The means, standard deviations, and Cronbach alpha coefficients for the Cultural Intelligence (CQ) Scale and for its subscales

CQ subscales	Mean	Standard Deviation	Cronbach alpha
Metacognitive CQ	17.52	3.29	.796
Cognitive CQ	19.85	6.14	.913
Motivational CQ	22.79	3.98	.801
Behavioral CQ	20.68	4.54	.855
Overall CQ Scale	81.31	14.91	.933

Further analysis revealed that the inter-item correlations within each scale were moderately positively strong. Further analysis showed that the removal of individual items would

lead to a drop in the Cronbach alphas for each scale, further supporting the decision for including the individual items.

HYPOTHESES TESTING

Hypothesis 1 predicted that younger respondents will have higher cultural intelligence scores compared to the older respondents. To test H1, we transformed the Age Group variable (see Table 1) into the new variable with two categories: ≤46 years of age and ≥ 47 years of age. Such data transformation resulted in the two groups of about equal size (139 and 134 respondents, respectively). The reason behind the decision to recode the Age Group variable in the manner described above was that, at the time of conducting the survey, the 46 years-of-age threshold was approximately corresponding to the split between the older generations (Baby Boomers and the Silent Generation) and the younger generations (Gen X-ers and Millennials) represented in the workforce. The "47 and over" age group, thus, comprises the age cohorts that came of age of when American society was less ethnically diverse and multiculturalism were receiving less political support. In contrast, Gen X-ers and Millennials grew up while interacting with people of various ethnic backgrounds. It was also the time when the dominant paradigm of acculturation changed from interpreting American society as a "melting pot" to a "mixed salad." (Leslie et. al., 2020).

The relatively small number of representatives of certain age cohorts in our sample (e.g., we had only 8 respondents under the age of 26) was the reason why we decided to combine age cohorts as described above.

To test H1, we ran the independent samples T-test with the CQ Scale and the four CQ subscales as dependent variables and the 2-category Age Group variable as the grouping variable. The results are largely supporting H1. The overall CQ scores ($t(272)=2.14$, $p<.05$), the Metacognitive subscale scores ($t(270)=4.59$, $p<.05$), the Cognitive subscale scores ($t(269)=1.69$, $p<.09$), the Motivational subscale scores ($t(271)=1.85$, $p<.07$), and Behavioral subscale ($t(271)=3.02$, $p<.05$) were all values were higher for the younger age cohorts than for the older ("47 and over") employees. Even though this difference only reached borderline significance for the Cognitive and Motivational subscales, the overall pattern was very consistent for all dimensions of cultural intelligence.

Recall that H2 states that the employees who frequently and closely interact with the students have higher cultural intelligence scores compared to the employees who interact with the students on a less frequent basis.

To test for H2, we divided all employee categories (see Table 1) into two types. The Academics, Student Life, and Athletics faculty and staff are engaged into more frequent and close contact with the students as part of their daily duties (teaching, advising, counselling, and coaching). Administrative staff from other divisions was assigned to another category since their duties do not typically result in everyday contact with the students. The CQ scores for these two categories were compared using the independent samples T-test. The results largely supported H2 across all dimensions of CQ. The employees engaged in a regular contact with the students scored significantly higher on the overall CQ scale (the sum of the 4 CQ subscales), specifically,

t(256)=2.82, p<.01). Likewise, the Cognitive scores (t(253)=2.65, p<.01) and Motivational scores (t(255)=2.55, p<.05) were significantly higher for the "frequent contact" category of employees, while the Metacognitive scores (t(254)1.86, p=.06) and Behavioral scores (t(255)=1.85, p=.06) were marginally significantly higher for the "frequent contact" employees.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Overall, our study provided yet another empirically tested confirmation of the reliability of the 20-item Cultural Intelligence scale (Van Dyne, Ang, and Koh, 2008) and of its subscales on a sample of faculty and staff employed in higher education. Cronbach alpha values for the overall CQ scale and for all four of its subscales (Metacognitive, Cognitive, Motivational, and Behavioral) exceeded .7, indicating sufficient levels of reliability (Nunnally, 1978).

The overall CQ scores (t(272)=2.14, p<.05), the Metacognitive subscale scores (t(270)=4.59, p<.05), the Cognitive subscale scores (t(269)=1.69, p<.09), the Motivational subscale scores (t(271)=1.85, p<.07), and Behavioral subscale (t(271)=3.02, p<.05) were all higher for the representatives of the younger age cohorts than for the older ("47 and over") employees. Even though this difference only reached borderline significance for the Cognitive and Motivational subscales, the overall pattern was very consistent for all dimensions of cultural intelligence. This pattern supports our view of the younger generations generally possessing higher levels of cultural intelligence. By virtue of having higher cultural intelligence and being more demographically diverse, younger employees might be best suited for the role of catalysts of cultural change at their organizations. To ensure that this transfer of cultural intelligence occurs, younger, interculturally competent, employees should be put into situations that empower them and enable them to share their cultural perspectives, lived experiences, and intercultural reflections with their co-workers. This can be achieved by offering organized retreats, staff interaction events, and various community service events.

Another finding of our study supports the view of Cultural Intelligence as of an individual capacity that is enhanced by practice. The hypotheses predicting that respondents who frequently interact with diverse student populations would exhibit higher levels of cultural intelligence was largely supported. Cognitive and Motivational scores in particular were significantly higher for the "frequent contact" category of employees. An alternative explanation, however, might suggest some sort of self-selection by the employees where people with higher levels of "soft skills" choose the job roles that call for more frequent contact with students. Further research is needed to better discern the causation behind this observed pattern.

Any educational institution, by nature of working with increasingly diverse populations of students, employees, and community partners, should be interested in fostering high levels of cultural intelligence in its employees to ensure better performance. To approach this process strategically, an institution will need to start by regularly assessing cultural intelligence of its employees. We advocate for the wider use of the 20-item Cultural Intelligence scale (Van Dyne, Ang, and Koh, 2008) by educational institutions for this purpose. The scale is easy to administer and score. It has a proven record of validity and reliability. One of the most obvious advantages of the 20-item CQ scale is that it yields not just the overall CQ score but also more granular data

on employees' Metacognitive, Cognitive, Motivational, and Behavioral scores. Fostering Cultural Intelligence of the staff of organizations that work with a variety of diverse populations requires assessing cultural intelligence and then designing a process for addressing any deficiencies that might be discovered in the process. Specific remedial measures might be needed for each specific pattern of CQ scores. For instance, an organization observing deficiency of cultural knowledge among their staff, might address this by offering training that focuses on educating employees about the customs and values of other cultures. A pattern characterized by relatively high knowledge of other cultural traditions, but low motivational scores (unwillingness to translate cultural knowledge into actual interaction with other cultures) or low behavioral scores (inability to interact efficiently with people from other cultures) would require a training of another sort. For instance, a training to foster cross-cultural motivation might attempt to build confidence in one's ability to be a successful cross-cultural communicator (Bandura, 1986). Future research is needed to design the most efficient training for each type of CQ deficiency. No matter what form the program of fostering employees' cultural intelligence will eventually take, the important first step is conducting an assessment of employee's cultural intelligence.

Other directions for future research in the area might include exploring and measuring the most direct impact of cultural intelligence on employee performance, specifically in educational institutions settings. Although cultural intelligence has been conceptualized as a form of general intelligence, along with emotional intelligence and social intelligence, research exploring the simultaneous manifestation of all of these facets of human intelligence in the workplace as well as research that explores correlations between these forms of intelligence in the workplace seems insufficient. Managers leading their organizations in the globalized world could benefit from these insights.

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