

Cross-cultural creativity in organizations

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ABSTRACT

Creativity and culture -at the national, organizational, and individual levels- are intertwined. This chapter focuses on the implications of cross-cultural issues on organizational creativity, highlighting the context-dependency of creativity. It aims to answer two questions (1) How can organizations use culture to increase their creativity, and (2) How can creativity be used to enhance culture. National, organizational, and personal cultures and their impact on organizational creativity are discussed.

Keywords: Organizational culture, organizational creativity, cross-cultural organizational creativity

Culture has a profound impact on organizational creativity. Often conceived of as an external set of factors – ranging from beliefs and ideologies to norms, values, and behavioral scripts (for a critical review see Jahoda, 2012) – cultures, both national and organizational, act from ‘within’ creative processes, both individual and group based. This is because, as we shall argue in this chapter, culture itself is a condition of possibility for creative expression (Glăveanu, 2011). Cultural systems offer the means for and shapes the goals and processes of creativity. This becomes more evident when we stop defining culture only in terms of societal (or organizational) norms and values and consider its psychological, material, social, and political dimensions. Language, material tools (including technology), and institutional practices, among others, are all part of culture (Cole, 1996) and they are essential for any type of creative action. Organizational life foregrounds cultural aspects by essentially regulating joint human activities and framing how, when, and why groups engage in creative versus more routine problem solving. Restrictive definitions of organizational culture are limited when it comes to recognizing the relationship between culture and creativity. For example, a common definition

refers to organizational culture “as shared perceptions of organizational work practices” (Van den Berg & Wilderom, 2004, p. 571). By reducing the cultural dimension to shared understandings, we are ignoring the embodied social practices through which these beliefs are constituted. The emphasis on sharedness suggests uniformity which is opposed to the uniqueness of creative action (Randel & Jaussi, 2017). In other words, organizational culture is what feeds a creative process or what results from one but is separated from creativity itself. This chapter starts from a different premise. Instead of creativity and culture interacting with each other from an external position, we propose that organizational creativity is already cultural and that organizational culture – its formation, maintenance, and transformation – is creative from the start.

This chapter starts by taking an overview of how explicitly defined national cultures affect the form and definition of creativity. We shall review the traditionally cited research that pits Eastern and Western creativity against each other before questioning the usefulness of this strict dichotomy in an increasingly networked world. This leads to an examination of the tension between national, organizational, and personal cultures. Ironically, while technological advances have led to an increase in culturally diverse virtual teams, these same advances may reduce travel and in-person cross cultural contact, solidifying national identities within an organization as time zones and language connect geographically proximal areas. The ubiquity of cross-cultural experiences in organizations requires skills which fall under the umbrella of Cultural Intelligence. A review of Cultural Intelligence highlights the importance of metacognitive processes to a skilled interaction with other cultures. These processes, we argue, can be distributed and scaffolded by firms’ organizational cultures and are thus best conceived of as systemic.

How does culture impact creativity?

Culture shapes individuals' perception of the world. It can determine how individuals explicitly and implicitly conceptualize creativity and even culture itself (Rudowicz, 2003). As previously mentioned, culture can refer to values, norms, and beliefs as well as the material and social contexts shared by a group of people and can thus be applied to both national and organizational cultures. Creativity involves the ability to produce work that is novel and useful in a given context (Lubart, 1994). The novelty and usefulness of the former may differ from one country to another, and from one organization to another. Furthermore, national and organizational cultural contexts can determine the expression of creativity; illustrated through Rhodes (1961) four P's of creativity (product, process, person, and press) and more recently the five A's of creativity (actor of a creative act, audience, actions, artifacts, and affordances; Glăveanu, 2013).

It has long been traditional to contrast Eastern and Western cultures precisely in terms of their conception of creativity. From the perspective of this research, "Western" refers to the US, Western Europe, Canada, Australian and New Zealand while "Eastern" refers to Asian countries such as China, Japan or Korea. Indeed, simplistic as this split seems, there are fairly robust differences between the cultures' perspectives on creativity (Shao et al., 2019). According to this tradition, Western cultures' definitions of creativity strongly emphasize individuality, self-expression and fulfillment, and revolutionary solutions and/or inventions (Westwood & Low, 2003). Western organizations may tend to define creative outputs as product-centered novelties. For example, Apple was initially present in the personal computer market and is now a leader in the music and online streaming services markets thanks to iTunes and Apple TV. On the contrary, Eastern cultures' definitions place a higher value on the

usefulness of creative outputs that may benefit a group of people (Rudowicz & Yue, 2002). Eastern organizations may tend to define creative outputs as products or processes that may not necessarily be ground-breaking yet do represent *incremental* improvements with a collective focus (Chua, Roth & Lemoine, 2015; Lampikoski & Emden, 1996). A case in point is Toyota's Global Body Line System, developed in the late 1990s, which allowed for a single 'master' brace to hold in place vehicle parts of different automobile models while they were being welded, instead of requiring a specific brace for each car model to be welded (Toyota, 2012).

In a typical example of these cultural differences, Niu and Kaufman (2013) outline some of the main differences between Chinese and American views of creativity. First, that the Chinese view creativity as a skill which can be attained by anyone which contrasts with the American view that creativity is the trait of a disruptive individual. Niu and Kaufman use the metaphor of a pork parfait because it is "both unusual and not designed for everyday consumption" (p.78). According to Niu and Kaufman, these different national conceptions of the very nature of creativity lead to different ideas about how that creativity can be harnessed. The Chinese culture places an emphasis on the deliberate hard work of the creative person. In contrast, Americans are focused on early inspiration, and generating and supporting naturally gifted intelligence. This emphasis on individual achievement continues to be reflected in the cultural differences in the balance between novelty and meaningfulness as Americans focus more on originality while the Chinese are more interested in creativity as appropriate to the situation.

However, although using an East versus West dichotomy highlights several interesting differences and facilitates cross-cultural research, it is a limiting view that risks oversimplifying reality by presenting culture as a static product of geographical boundaries. Within the Eastern

culture alone, there are notable differences regarding creativity; Indian children and adults implicitly associate creativity to a process (more than an end product) related to a divine gift or power, and to remnants of previous lives (Sen & Sharma, 2011). Japanese teenagers and adults implicitly associate creativity to being passionate about work, energetic, patient, solving problems well, and being future-oriented (Lim & Plucker, 2001). Furthermore, using countries as proxies of culture may be inaccurate as there are many ‘subcultures’ that coexist within a nation’s boundaries and may differ between regions and cities, as was the case for conceptions of creativity between Chinese undergraduate students living in Beijing compared to those living in Guangzhou (Rudowicz & Yue, 2000). International organizations that are aware of these cultural subtleties tend to market an identical product differently depending on the culture of their target audience. Exemplifying this, Toyota developed eight different ads to market its Camry in the United States alone, appealing to African Americans, Hispanics, Asians and even to “transcultural” communities (Maheshwari, 2017). A focus on this East/West dichotomy ignores the increasing fluidity and dynamism of cross-cultural exchange as well the nuances of cultural communities within cultures.

Given creativity’s context dependency and the existing variations in the value attributed to the usefulness and novelty of creative work, cultural differences are also present regarding the creative process itself. Despite its aforementioned limits, the use of the East versus West dichotomy facilitates the illustration of different conceptions of the creative process. Eastern cultures tend to adopt a view of the creative process as involving a full circle approach, that utilizes and builds upon past ideas or work to achieve incremental improvements (Lubart, 1999). Western cultures tend to accentuate a clear beginning and end to the creative process. Following the same line of thought, results from Nagaoka and Walsh’s survey (2009) revealed that projects with incremental objectives resulted in a greater number of Japanese inventions

(66%) than American inventions (48%). Conversely, projects with revolutionizing objectives led to more American inventions (24%) compared to Japanese inventions (8%). Applied to organizational creativity, Toyota illustrates an Eastern continuous improvement mindset, or *kaizen* (the art of continuous improvement). Employees are actively encouraged to improve current tasks, methods, and products with a holistic and creative collective focus that is also reflected in higher financial rewards associated with collective versus individual work (Husby & Berlanga, 2022). In addition, Toyota's design team aims to celebrate past and future Japanese originality while satisfying social factors, called its J-factor experience (Clifford, 2014). On the other hand, Nike's organizational approach to creativity accentuates individuality, uniqueness, boldness, and daring to go against the crowd depicted by its Innovation Kitchen, a place where their designers work in 'top secret' conditions (Eden, 2016) further highlighting the groundbreaking and individualistic Western approach to creativity.

In addition to the way that creativity is defined across cultures, cultural conceptions of creativity determine its antecedents. A recent meta-analysis used Amabile's componential model of creativity (1996) and Hofstede's cultural dimensions model (2011) to investigate the influence of culture on creativity (Yong, Mannucci & Lander, 2020). Results revealed that creative thinking skills are particularly relevant in cultures characterized by individualism, low power distance, and low uncertainty avoidance. Intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy were precursors of creativity in cultures characterized by collectivism, power distance, masculinity, and low uncertainty avoidance. Expertise or domain relevant knowledge was an important antecedent of creativity in cultures marked by masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, and collectivism. These results suggest that by taking the specificities of a cultural context into account, organizations can focus on encouraging the development of certain

factors that may facilitate organizational creativity more than others. These factors may in turn influence the way individuals communicate, collaborate, make decisions, and lead others.

However, again, in spite of the previously cited cross-cultural differences affecting organizational creativity, there is a frequently mentioned cross-cultural antecedent found in creative organizations; a decentralized corporate structure. Both Apple and Google's loose structure is said to have inspired Microsoft's shift in structure and led to its Windows 10 and cloud success (Wingfield, 2013). From 2004 until 2013, Google's 20%-time rule, allowed employees to autonomously work on projects they were passionate about individually or collectively for a fifth of their overall working hours. Employees would post their ideas on Google Moderator, an internal idea management system, and volunteers from different departments were free to contribute to the development of new projects starting from brainstorming stages to the implementation of ideas. Although this initiative is no longer in place, its decentralized structure led to the creation of Gmail, Google maps, Google talk, and to employees from different departments working on something they believed in (D'Onfro, 2015). An ongoing successful example is Samsung's Creativity Lab, or C-Lab founded in 2012 which operates as a holacracy. Individuals work in a flat organizational environment with high levels of autonomy that have led to 46% of the 15-20 yearly projects being transferred to business divisions for development and 18% resulting in entirely new businesses (Samsung, 2016).

National, organizational and personal cultures

Globalization and advances in communication technology challenge the very existence of a national or organizational culture that truly depicts and represents a nation's or an organization's perception of the world and individuals' behavioral tendencies. Professional and

personal cultures are also heavily colored by a multitude of factors that can seem paradoxical. It would be tempting to think that Saint Patrick's Day is only celebrated in Ireland, thus strengthening Ireland's national borders and Irish individuals' sense of belonging and pride. Yet, every 17th of March magically brings the Irishness out of individuals all around the globe. The same can be said about organizational and personal cultures. Studies using bicultural participants illustrate how experimental design can be used to 'activate' one culture over another. In a series of studies using bicultural participants that had been primed using images of Chinese icons, the former provided an external attribution explanation of a picture portraying a fish swimming in front of a school of fish. Those that were primed with American icons provided a greater number of internal attribution explanations. Results across two follow-up studies were similar and consistent; the accessibility of cultural knowledge rather than its possession enables its activation and can thus influence individuals' behavior (Hong et al., 2000). Similar results are observed in studies among bilingual participants that use language as a proxy for culture. Participants' behavior, specifically their divergent thinking potential, varies as a function of the language 'activated' during a divergent thinking task (Storme et al., 2017). These results may indicate that activating certain cultural concepts may elicit certain behavioral tendencies that may perhaps go beyond an individual's organizational or personal culture. However, the increasing ease of international travel has led to an increase in cross-national collaboration (Huang et al., 2012) and the rise of virtual teams has allowed people to work together from different geographical regions (Reiter-Palmon et al., 2021). This means that analyzing cultural effects on creativity using the narrow confines of a national culture is less easily sustainable. Rather alongside national cultures, there is a fluid interplay of cross-cultural ideas and practices driven by technological advances. Therefore, we propose that research in cross-cultural creativity should move beyond detailing the differences between

cultures and rather examine some of the underlying mechanisms through which cross-cultural creativity arises within teams and organizations.

A key notion that comes to deepen our understanding of the relationship between creativity and culture, within an organizational context, is that of ‘personal culture’ (see also Valsiner, 2007). This notion might sound counterintuitive given that most definitions of culture emphasize its sharedness – either at a national or organizational level – and yet one of the most direct forms of culture is reflected by how it constitutes individual minds. Personal cultures designate, broadly, the way in which individuals appropriate, transform and produce cultural artifacts. It is, essentially, a creative process as it involves, in Vygotskian terms, the interplay between the internalization and externalization of culture (for a discussion of how these processes contribute to creativity see Moran and John-Steiner, 2003). One of the key engines of creativity in organizations is precisely the tension between national, organizational and personal cultures, a kind of tension that leads to the transformation of individual and organizational identities and practices. This can be grasped by adopting a perspectival approach to the creative process (for details see Glăveanu, 2020). In essence, this approach postulates the fact that creativity emerges out of differences of perspective existing within and between individuals and groups. Such differences are reflected upon and lead to perspectival dialogues marked by the production of meaningful novelties (e.g., ideas, objects, practices, norms and values). Both national and organizational groups promote a given set of perspectives that encourage individuals to think about the world and to act within it in particular ways. At the same time, there is always room for adopting new perspectives through repositioning and collaboration (Gillespie & Martin, 2014). These actions enrich personal cultures at an individual level and foster groups within organizations with a variety of perspectives to draw upon. In this context, gaps and tensions between perspectives ‘force’ individuals and

organizations alike to build new understandings of the situation or the problem at hand. Thus, one way of tracing the cultural roots of creativity in organizations becomes identifying what kind of positions and perspectives are adopted by different individuals and groups within it. It also involves noticing what kind of cultural resources are mobilized in their construction, and analyzing how any tensions between are navigated within the organization. Typically, the resulting creative outputs bear the mark of national, organizational and/or personal cultures without being reduced to any of them.

How can organizations use culture to increase creativity?

Culture is not static, oftentimes it can be implicit and invisible to outsiders. Nevertheless, despite its seemingly intangible quality, organizations can use the concept of culture to boost their creativity. In the past, exposure to multiple cultures in organizations has been associated with positive consequences including increased profits, enhanced positive relations at work, increased job and customer satisfaction, and ultimately business success (Stahl, Maznevski, Voigt & Jonsen, 2010). Research conducted by McKinsey & Company in 2017 involving more than one thousand companies in twelve countries revealed that companies with ethnically and culturally diverse board members had profits that were 33% higher than their less diverse counterparts (Hunt, Yee, Prince & Dixon-Fyle, 2018). Results from another study conducted by the Boston Consulting Group painted a similar picture, indicating that companies with diverse leadership teams account for 19% more innovation-related profits (Lorenzo et al., 2018). Over time, organizations have adopted a variety of cross-cultural related strategies that facilitate creativity ranging from: strategic deployment of multicultural individuals, varying team composition throughout different phases of the creative process, creating cross-cultural

teams, accessing or creating culturally diverse environments, and through mergers and acquisitions.

Several multinational companies attribute their global appeal, success, and creativity to the presence and strategic placement of their multicultural talent. L'Oréal is a case in point. In 2019, the French beauty giant operated in 150 countries. The key to its worldwide success was partly linked to its multicultural product development managers who understand and communicate local markets' needs, identify new opportunities and gaps, and tweak products to better suit the needs of culturally different customers (Hong & Doz, 2013). Other companies like PepsiCo, Nissan, Renault, Coca-Cola, and Avon attribute their creative performance and success to the placement of multicultural individuals in strategic positions, seen through their oftentimes multicultural CEOs, executives, and managers (Fitzsimmons, 2013; Fitzsimmons, Miska & Stahl, 2011; Hong et Doz, 2013). Multicultural individuals have internalized more than two cultures through their upbringing, quantity and depth of experiences abroad, and/or through intercultural relationships and are capable of switching between cultural schemes, norms, and behaviors in response to cultural cues (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2010).

In other industries such as the fashion industry, both strategic placement of multicultural individuals as creative directors and the 'development' of multicultural individuals through exposure to different cultures enhance organizations' creative performance. A 2015 study analyzed 21 seasonal fashion collections (fall/winter and spring/summer) from 270 fashion houses. Results revealed that the creativity of seasonal collections was predicted by creative directors' foreign professional experiences, specifically the latter's variety and length (Godart, Maddux, Shipilov & Galinsky, 2015). Similar results were found in a 2014 study, among 3,160 scientists from sixteen different countries within four scientific disciplines: (1) Biology, (2) Chemistry, (3) Earth and Environmental Sciences, and (4) Materials Science. The findings

indicated that the scientists who worked abroad or had lived in a country other than their country of origin had a greater number of highly cited research articles compared to the published works of domestic scientists (Franzoni, Scellato & Stephan, 2014).

Another cross-cultural related strategy organizations can use to increase their creativity involves varying team composition throughout different stages of the creative process. To encourage fresh perspectives and new ideas, Honda and Canon have been known to assign initial phases of creativity-related projects to new recruits. Although it can be argued that all employees are part of the same organization and share the same values, new recruits can bring an outside perspective that is not guided by a 'the way things are done here' mentality, which may lead to a tunnel vision regarding creativity and innovation. Senior members of these organizations lead teams of new recruits that are tasked with developing new and original ideas. Senior members' role is to ensure the feasibility and viability of ideas and projects generated by new recruits, which are then passed on to other teams for development (O'Reilly & Tushman, 2004). French companies are known to ask new recruits to write a *rapport d'étonnement* (literally translated as an astonishment report) shortly after their arrival, identifying everything they found to be surprising, in the hopes that it leads to organizational improvements and the consideration of new perspectives.

Another way that organizations can use culture to increase their creativity is through the development of cross-cultural teams. Electrolux, the world's second largest appliance maker headquartered in Stockholm, faced steep competition from low-cost Chinese appliances in the 1990s. Its Consumer Innovation division decided to replace its usual engineer-only team composition approach within its product development department, with a cross-cultural and cross-functional approach. Product development teams comprised of individuals from multiple

departments around the globe including design, marketing, engineering, and sales replaced previous engineer-only teams (Sains & Reed, 2006). The strategy proved successful, leading to creative products that increased the company's profits worldwide and continue to be used today (Electrolux, 2022). Other companies use temporary cross-cultural and functional teams to boost their creativity. One such company is Nissan, the multinational Japanese car manufacturer, which went one step further and continually creates temporary cross-functional teams that include individuals *within* different departments of the organization as well as visiting academics and engineers from *outside* the organization, from all over the world (Nissan Motor Corporation, 2007). These cross-cultural teams have driven various R&D initiatives including hybrid and autonomous vehicles, environmentally-friendly and safety-improving technologies.

Recently, an increasing number of organizations are using culture to inspire creativity by accessing or creating culturally diverse environments, including incubators and accelerators. One example is Station F, the world's largest startup incubator founded in 2017 in Paris. Station F is a multicultural ecosystem welcoming more than one thousand startups from around the world in a 370,000 ft² (34,000 m²) space designed with a 'Create', 'Share' and 'Chill' areas that promote and facilitate interactions between entrepreneurs from different professional and national cultural backgrounds, leading to new business partnerships and collaborations (Burgess, 2017; Station F, 2019). Multinational corporations including Google, Microsoft, Ubisoft and Facebook among others, rent out office space at Station F and mentor a new set of startups every six months. This enables them to increase their creative potential through new products/services sold on their platforms, new product acquisitions, and inspiration for new projects stemming from a cross-cultural ecosystem. Another example, is Morgan-Stanley's in-house New York based accelerator, known as its *Multicultural Innovation Lab*. It mentors

cohorts of startups every five months and facilitates creativity in business through its accelerator's culturally-heterogeneous environment comprised of multicultural startups, mentors, and investors. It increases its own creative outputs through equity in participating startups (Morgan Stanley, 2022). In 2017, L'Oréal partnered with Founders Factory to invest in early-stage startups. Ever since, both are behind the co-creation of two new companies every year (L'Oréal, 2017). *Unilever Foundry*, is Unilever's virtual platform that uses cross-cultural and cross-functional partnerships around the globe to boost creativity and innovation in business. One example includes its partnership with Genero, a startup that connects an ecosystem of multicultural content creators, and its successful ad campaigns for many of Unilever's brands including Sunlight, Ben & Jerry's, Wall's, St. Ives, and Dove among others (The Unilever Foundry, 2019). *Arsenal's Innovation Lab* created in 2017, seeks to increase its creativity through partnerships with technology-based startups. Some of these include the use of chatbots, augmented reality, e-commerce technology, and artificial intelligence to enhance Arsenal supporters' football experience (Arsenal Innovation Lab, 2022). Other organizations foster creativity at even earlier stages of idea and project development through in-house incubators. The latter are programs within an organization that enable its employees to become entrepreneurs by providing necessary funding, services (i.e., marketing, legal), space, and time to develop and test their ideas. Some examples include *P&G Ventures* by Procter & Gamble, *Rise* by Barclays, and *Intel's Startup Program* (Intel, 2022; P&G Ventures, 2022; Rise, 2022). Ericsson encourages its own employees to test and develop new ideas through its *Ericsson One* in-house idea incubator program (Ericsson, 2022) as does Nestlé's *InGenius* program (InGenius, 2022), and Atlassian's *Point A* initiative (Point A, 2022).

Another way that organizations can use culture to boost their creativity is through mergers and acquisitions. Microsoft is an example of a serial acquirer, buying out innovative companies

to raise the creativity of its products ranging from Skype in 2011, Yammer in 2012, Nokia in 2013, LinkedIn in 2016, GitHub in 2018, and AT&T's network cloud in 2021, among others. After Disney's acquisition of Pixar in 2006, the newly-formed organizational culture hit a few bumps in the road before being associated with box office hits including Toy Story 3, Wall-E, and Coco. Pixar's employees feared Pixar would lose its entrepreneurial DNA and become negatively influenced by Disney's organizational culture. Despite these fears, the acquisition proved successful with Disney actively using Pixar's creative organizational culture to boost its own and Pixar using Disney's culture to facilitate and increase its production capacity (Wise, 2014). Recently, Disney's 2017 acquisition of 21st Century Fox has also improved its creativity by strengthening its presence in the streaming platform business through a wider variety of content on its own online streaming platform *Disney+* and its majority shareholder status v-à-v the streaming service *Hulu*.

Scaffolding the Benefits of Cross-Cultural Experiences

Case studies on cross cultural creativity such as those described above often highlight the benefits of demographic diversity but the overall research evidence is mixed. Some researchers report an increase in creativity (O'Reilly, Williams & Barsade, 1997), others a decrease (McLeod et al, 1996) and others indicate no difference between groups (Paletz et al, 2004). Therefore, it is important to note that cross cultural work at the organizational level is not a panacea. Rather, the situation appears to be more complex. While there is much anecdotal evidence for the importance of cross-cultural integration, this could also be driven by a form of optimistic survivorship bias, that is to say that the successes are more commonly reported than the failures.

The reasons for the general hypothesis that cross cultural experiences and integration would lead to an increase in creativity are tied to our understanding of the cognitive processes that underlie creative thinking whether on a team or individual level. Take for example Mumford et al.'s (1991) cognitive process model as a base. The model consists of seven fluid processes: (1) problem construction, (2) information encoding, (3) category specification, (4) category combination and reorganization, (5) idea evaluation, (6) implementation and (7) monitoring. It is plausible that culturally diverse teams would be beneficial to more than one of these processes. There is likely to be different views on problem construction which could support this phase. In addition, team members would have a wider range of categories to draw on for both specification and combination, the metrics by which the ideas are evaluated are likely to be different and the process of implementation will be affected by cultural differences.

As outlined by Chua and Ng (2017) one of the reasons that cross cultural interactions should lead to an increase in creative outcomes is that an increase in the underlying knowledge base (because it is distributed across people) supports the resources available for creative cognition. Again, this is an additive model which suggests that the more experiences to which someone is exposed to, the more they are likely to have a knowledge base to draw upon for novel and interesting combinations. However, Chua and Ng's research show that it is not as simple as this. The increase in cultural knowledge also creates a cognitive load meaning that individual cognitive resources are somewhat depleted. This latter finding may explain the different outcomes of creative cognition in teams as well as point to the importance of a conscious engagement with complexity.

Working cross-culturally requires a different skill set to working in a mono-cultural setting. It is easy to romanticize the benefits of cross-culturalism in a way which undermines the

problems of navigating the differences between people. As we outlined above, a perspectival approach to creativity sees creativity as arising from tensions between different perspectives rather than from a merging of those perspectives. Cross-cultural approaches to creativity do not result in a monoculture. Maximizing the benefits of these differences requires a different skill set to traditional measures of intelligence: Cultural Intelligence (CQ).

Cultural intelligence (CQ) is defined as the “capability of an individual to effectively function in situations characterized by cultural diversity” (Ang & Van Dyne, 2015, p. 3). CQ is a fundamentally situated form of intelligence describing a set of cognitive abilities, behaviors and motivations which characterize skill in handling cross-cultural interactions. Andresen and Bergdolt (2017) suggest that it is even important in a domestic context as multiculturalism is now a commonly encountered across all organizations either through diverse teams or customer base. Navigating this requires an expansion of our understanding of the underlying cognitive skills necessary for innovation to occur. However, CQ draws on traditional models of intelligence while expanding our understanding of what it means to behave intelligently in a culturally complex world.

CQ is a multidimensional construct. It consists of four related but theoretically distinct concepts: (1) metacognitive, (2) cognitive, (3) motivational and (4) behavioral. Metacognitive CQ refers to the capacity to understand and acquire cultural knowledge and relies on an individual questioning their own norms and understanding. Those high in metacognitive CQ take a deliberate approach to understanding cross-cultural interactions. Cognitive cultural intelligence encompasses the knowledge of different cultures which has been built up through experience. Motivational CQ is used to describe the capability of directing attention to cultural

differences, while behavioral CQ reflects an individual's ability to actively shape their verbal and nonverbal behavior to reflect cultural complexity (Ang et al., 2007)

While CQ is closely related to other intelligence constructs such as emotional intelligence (EQ), there is also accumulating empirical evidence to suggest that CQ is conceptually distinct, and this is in part driven by its relational nature. CQ is not something we *possess* but is rather a form of intelligence we *perform* which requires high levels of skill across all four dimensions outlined above. Therefore, a driver of the importance of cross-cultural diversity to organizational cognition could be the individual effect of CQ. For example, CQ can attenuate the negative effect of foreign language anxiety. The latter has been identified as lowering the performance of multicultural teams who, even if they communicate in the same language, are likely to be working at different proficiency levels (Jimenez et al., 2017; Presbitero, 2020). Indeed, there is emerging evidence that cultural intelligence is a significant predictor of individual-level creativity (Yunlu et al., 2017), suggesting that those high in CQ are also high in the cognitive skills that underlie creative cognition.

In addition, there is likely to be a bidirectional and cumulative effect of CQ and multicultural experiences. Given that even short-term international experiences can improve CQ (Engle & Crowne, 2014) it is likely that those that function well in multicultural teams will increase their CQ leading to a positive feedback loop. Conscious exposure to different cultures requires consciously engaging different mindsets that at times may involve contradictory positions.

From a cognitive perspective, the reinforcement and training of the processes theorized to be required for creativity such as cognitive flexibility and perspective taking, could go some way towards explaining the mechanisms through which cross cultural composition of teams

increases innovative and creative outcomes as well as those through which it does not (Hoever et al, 2012). If metacognitive CQ is the key to creativity, then it may be possible to train for creativity in this way by allowing the organization to play this metacognitive role. Take for example, the role of diversity in team composition (see chapter in this book). We know that diversity in teams is far more beneficial when the team members are taught explicitly of the benefits of cultural diversity (Homan et al., 2015; Li et al., 2017). In this way, the organizational culture is functioning in a metacognitive way and assumes the reflective role we have seen is important to individual-level creativity in culturally complex environments. From this perspective, there is no contradiction in drawing on group level processes to understand individual cognition. Culture works as a scaffold and an offload, taking over some of the metacognitive processes that are necessary to benefiting the most from cross-cultural experiences. In this way, cultural can enhance the effects of CQ.

In other words, successful cross-cultural teams may be more creative, because the same processes which are required to successfully navigate a cross-cultural team may be those which underlie creativity. This is not a trivial observation, while we have focused on an individual level of CQ in this section, CQ is by its very nature a situated form of intelligence which is embedded in a social dynamic. If there are cross overs between the cognitive processes underlying CQ and those underlying creative cognition then this suggests that creative cognition research would do well to orient itself outwards as well as inwards.

The role of conscious navigation of cultural perspectives is explored in areas beyond CQ. Knowledge systems inform how people make sense of the world and determine our ways of knowing, being and acting. They are a product of culture and are embedded within it. Therefore, it is not surprising that there is tension when contrasting knowledge systems meet.

Martin Nakata (2002), an Australian Indigenous scholar, characterized this place as the *Cultural Interface*. Though he developed the concept to describe the intersection of Western and Indigenous cultures, it has universal applicability. It is a place of tension that requires conscious negotiation to enable all perspectives space to breathe. The interface requires curiosity, openness, and the ability to take a meta-perspective to question one's way of knowing and seeing it as another way of doing things - rather than a truth. The Cultural Interface shares much in common with CQ and creativity. All require an appreciation of other perspectives as they can help reshape culture to be more diverse, inclusive, connected and innovative. They are spaces that are multi-layered, multi-dimensional and paradoxical. The Cultural Interface is a fertile meeting place where organizations can construct future narratives when approached with the appropriate respect.

Acknowledging that cross cultural interactions create a cultural interface can help people better navigate its creative tensions. One knowledge system does not seek to dominate; instead, both knowledge systems undergo reflection and interrogation. This approach enables a creative convergence that explores how these contrasting points of view can keep expanding and responding to change. Embedding this way of working enables creativity by generating more possibilities. It can also help people increase their CQ by permitting them to explore tensions without the certainty of outcomes. The Cultural Interface is a starting point on how people can interact, develop, and transform to constantly changing and evolving circumstances.

A practical way of developing CQ more to promote healthy interactions at the Cultural Interface, can be training staff in the creative principle of deferring judgement (Puccio et al., 2012). Deferring judgement means suspending evaluation to entertain more perspectives. Underpinning this action is the understanding that diversity is the lifeblood of creativity and,

therefore, people should not strive to see things only through our perspective. By embracing a multiplicity of perspectives, is how people can grow, transform, and change.

Applying a cognitive lens to the phenomenon of cross-cultural creativity in organizations helps us to become better at recognizing the mechanisms through which cross-culturalism can improve innovation outcomes. While traditional approaches to creative cognition are concerned with the way in which individuals generate novel ideas and tend to assume that those processes are internal, a focus on the benefits of perspectival approaches to creative cognition supports the importance of the skills of managing relational actions in the world.

Conclusion

As organizations work towards maximizing their talent pool, there is an increasing reliance on global virtual teams. This process was already underway prior to March 2020 but with the reduction in both domestic and international travel and the increasing reliance on virtual modes of communication, became much more established. These virtual teams are often cross cultural and international in scope. While CQ is a key mediator of the effectiveness of these teams, it is not yet clear whether experience of working cross-culturally in this way has increased underlying CQ in the way that actual physical immersion in a culture does. Many of the benefits of virtual teams are framed in terms of efficiency such as a rapid turnaround as one group works while the others sleep. Cross cultural virtual teams may not provide the same collaborative boost.

This chapter argued for the many ways in which cultures – at the national, organizational and individual level – fuel creativity. We problematized, in the process, homogeneous understandings of both creativity and culture and showed that cultures are not merely ‘external’

to the creative person just like creativity doesn't take place from outside but from within culture and society. With these axioms in mind, we can address two important and inter-related questions: a) how can organizations use culture to foster creativity? and b) how can the use of creativity contribute back to enriching their culture? The first question has been addressed at length in this chapter and, overall, a systemic approach was proposed, one that recognizes the sociocultural embedding of both the culture and the organization. This means that using cultural tools and forms of scaffolding to increase creativity cannot target individuals alone, isolated from their context. On the contrary, we need to create networks of creative collaboration across the organization that can support long term rather than one-off creativity.

In this way, organizational cultures should act as a form of distributed metacognition, scaffolding and supporting the benefits of cross-cultural encounters. Such networks also make the relationship between the first and second question evident. Creativity is one of the main tools used by individuals and organizations to build and transform culture, including organizational culture. In other words, creative processes not only draw on cultural experiences but they create opportunities for generating such new experiences. Organizations that know how to actively use their social and cultural resources in order to increase their creative expression tend to be more competitive and attractive for their employees. This is because they are able to recognize, at the same time, the similarities and differences between people and to maximize the chances of using both to create. An interest in (cross)cultural creativity should accommodate also one for (cross)creative cultures, those that make it possible for people to thrive inside and outside of their organizations.

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