Cultural Intelligence

Improving Your CQ to Engage
Our Multicultural World

David A. Livermore

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series preface

In many ways, youth ministry has come of age. No longer seen as "a stepping-stone to real ministry in the church," especially in North America, youth ministry is now seen as a viable career option. Over the last few decades a wide range of professional resources, conferences, periodicals, and books have been developed on this topic. Most Christian colleges and seminaries now offer a variety of courses—if not degree programs—in youth ministry. Youth ministry has all it needs to continue to push the church to care about and serve the needs of the young in God's name, except for one thing: we have a long way to go to develop a rich, broad, and diverse conversation that frames, defines, and grounds our missional call.

There is good news, of course. There is a professional organization, Association of Youth Ministry Educators, that sponsors an annual conference and publishes a solid emerging journal. Several thoughtful books have helped to shape the discipline's future. There are also now two major publishers who have academic lines dedicated to furthering the field of youth ministry. We have made great progress, but we must all work together to continue deepening our understanding of what youth ministry should be.

The purpose of Baker Academic's Youth, Family, and Culture series is to raise the level of dialogue concerning how we think about, teach, and live out youth ministry. As a branch of practical theology, academic youth ministry must move beyond a primarily skills-based focus to a theologically driven expression of a contextualized commitment of the local church to a targeted population. James Fowler defines practical theology as "theological reflection and construction arising out of and giving guidance to a community of faith in the *praxis* of its mission. Practical theology is critical and constructive reflection leading to

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ongoing modification and development of the ways the church shapes its life to be in partnership with God's work in the world.[1] And as Scott Cormode reminds us, we must not shirk our calling, but "must strive to nurture leaders that are faithful. . . . Schools must prepare leaders to translate this faithfulness into effective action."[2] This is precisely what those of us who are called to engage the church in theological reflection of contemporary youth and family issues must do—develop a practical theology that takes seriously the reality of the context we are in, regardless of how and where it takes us. This is the future of youth and family ministry in the church.

Dave Livermore's *Cultural Intelligence* is the second book in the Youth, Family, and Culture series. Dr. Livermore brings a vital and helpful correction to how we think about cross-cultural ministry and relationships, issues highly relevant to individuals involved in youth ministry, missions, and church ministry. His book is thoroughly theological and at the same time eminently practical. Thus, this volume is an example of a practical theology of youth and family ministry. May this book spur on our much-needed conversation of what it means to be in youth ministry, now and in the future.

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Chap Clark
Fuller Theological Seminary
May 2008

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introduction

What do you do when you encounter someone who isn't like you? How do you feel? What goes on inside you? How do you relate to him or her? These are the kinds of questions we want to explore in this book. Few things are more basic to life than expressing love and respect for people who look, think, believe, act, and see differently than we do. We want to adapt to the barrage of cultures around us while still remaining true to ourselves. We want to let the world change us so that we can be part of changing the world. And we want to move from the *desire* to love across the chasm of cultural difference to the *ability* to express our love for people of difference. Relating lovingly to our fellow human beings is central to what it means to be human. And when it comes down to it, Christian ministry at its core is interacting with all kinds of people in ways that give them glimpses of Jesus in us.

The billions of us sharing planet Earth together have so much in common. We're all born. We all die. We're all created in the image of God. We eat, sleep, persevere, and care for our young. We long for meaning and purpose, and we develop societies with those around us.

But the way we go about the many things we have in common is deeply rooted in our unique personalities and cultures. So although we have so much in common, we have as much or more about us that's different. Asian. European. Tattooed. Clean-cut. Male. Female. Old. Young. Pentecostal. Emergent. Republican. Democrat. Suburban. Rural. Urban. These points of difference are where we find both our greatest challenges and our greatest discoveries. And as the world becomes increasingly more connected and accessible, the number of encounters we have with those who are culturally different are growing daily. Most of us are more comfortable with people like ourselves. But seeking out and loving people of difference is a far greater challenge. Therefore, learning how to reach across the chasm of cultural difference with love and respect is becoming an essential competency for today's ministry leader.

Why This Book?

There are several helpful resources available on cross-cultural ministry. Many of these have informed my own thinking and practice. However, research has shown that a significant number of missional initiatives continue to fail because of cultural differences.[1] Whether it is Bruce Wilkinson's failed attempts at saving AIDS orphans in Swaziland,[2] well-intentioned short-term missionaries who end up hindering the work of local churches,[3] or the ways churches unknowingly perpetuate racism in their local communities,[4] something has to change. With the growing opportunities for multicultural interactions at home and abroad, the question of how ministry leaders and their organizations can effectively minister in culturally diverse situations is a critical and challenging problem. This problem cannot be addressed by simple lists of cultural taboos that sometimes appear in books on cross-cultural interaction. On the other hand, some books on contextualization are so complex and cerebral that ministry leaders are tempted to toss them aside as little more than ivory-tower rhetoric. This book attempts to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

The most helpful resources about cross-cultural ministry that have been distributed by Christian publishers are oriented primarily toward missionaries.[5] I've often wished more pastors and parachurch leaders would read these books as well because there is much to be learned from them for the work of ministry leaders who never move abroad. But ministry leaders at home often overlook such books. This book draws from some of the most helpful material written for the missionary audience and applies it to ministry leaders working in rural, urban, and suburban contexts at home. And I hope the book serves as a helpful addition to the resources needed by ministry leaders living and serving abroad as missionaries or in other capacities of service.

The primary distinction of this book is that it uses an approach to cross-cultural interaction that stems from inward transformation rather than from information or, worse yet, from artificial political correctness. Our goal is not simply to learn more about different cultures, nor is it just to become better at "navigating cultural differences." *We must actually become more multicultural people so that we might better express love cross-culturally.* Avoiding ethnic slurs and having a Latino celebration is a start—but to stop there is a superficial approach at best.

Most of the resources addressing cross-cultural communication and behavior emphasize what we need to know (information) and how we need to act (behavior). Clearly those are important priorities for cross-cultural interaction, but they aren't enough. Often we learn about another culture we intend to visit, but as soon as we visit and encounter

dissonance, we abort the knowledge we gained and resort to what's comfortable. Furthermore, two individuals can go through the same cross-cultural training and perform very differently when they actually engage in cross-cultural relationships. Transformation from within is what is needed most.

As a result, *Cultural Intelligence: Improving Your CQ to Engage Our Multicultural World* takes a different approach. This book draws from the emerging domain of cultural intelligence to take us on an inward journey while simultaneously reaching across the chasm of cultural difference. A cultural intelligence quotient (CQ) measures the ability to effectively reach across the chasm of cultural difference in ways that are loving and respectful. It is a measurement and a metaframework that draws from a variety of disciplines. Although cultural intelligence includes having information about different cultures and what they value, it begins with understanding ourselves. This book is as much about discovering ourselves and understanding the cultures of which we're a part as it is about understanding others. As we widen our view to include what's going on within us, we will be able to interact more lovingly with our ethnically different neighbors and the indigenous workers with whom we partner across the ocean. That's our destination in this journey—learning how to effectively express love for people unlike us.
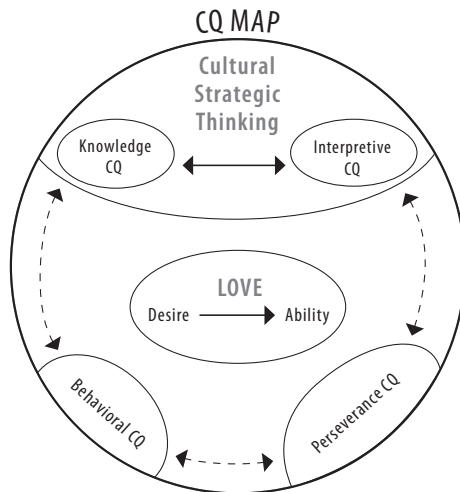
Book Organization

Figure 1. CQ Map

Cultural intelligence consists of four different factors, knowledge CQ, interpretive CQ, perseverance CQ, and behavioral CQ, all of which overlap in a variety of ways (see fig. 1). These four factors are incorporated into the organization of the book.

The first part of the book, "Love: CQ Overview," includes three chapters that provide an overview of cultural intelligence as the pathway toward more authentically expressing our love for the Other. In these chapters, I will consider why CQ matters from three different vantage points: in light of the realities of twenty-first-century ministry, from a theological perspective, and as compared to the many other theories of intercultural competency. These vantage points provide the backdrop for an understanding of why ministry leaders from Kansas to Timbuktu must be committed to growing in cultural intelligence as a way to effectively serve and lead. Love is the primary reason cultural intelligence is an essential competency in the life of twenty-first-century ministry leaders.

The second part of the book, "Understand: Knowledge CQ," covers the seminal material related to the first factor of cultural intelligence: knowledge. Knowledge, or cognitive, CQ measures one's understanding of cross-cultural issues and differences. It is the aspect most often emphasized when dealing with issues of cultural difference. This part begins with a chapter about American culture as a way for American readers to begin their inward journey as it relates to cultural awareness. This part also covers the important elements of a general cross-cultural understanding, including understanding the notion of culture itself, its application to a variety of cultural domains, and the relevance of language and cultural values to knowledge CQ.

The next part of the book, "Go Deep: Interpretive CQ," is devoted to interpretive, or metacognitive, CQ. Interpretive CQ is the degree to which we're mindful and aware when we interact cross-culturally. This is the dimension of cultural intelligence that appears to be most lacking in the performance of many American ministry leaders. Yet interpretive CQ is the key process linking the understanding gained in knowledge CQ with the actual ability to apply it to how we behave. The chapters in this part move through the integral aspects of interpretive CQ, beginning with the importance of becoming mindful and aware, then examining some of the ways we actually think about the world and how that affects the way we do ministry. This part concludes by looking at a model to assist in nurturing interpretive CQ in ourselves and others.

The final part, "Express: Perseverance and Behavioral CQ," while entirely dependent on the understanding and interpretations that come from knowledge and interpretive CQ, moves us toward actually applying cultural intelligence to our service and relationships. Both of the final two factors of cultural intelligence—perseverance and behavioral—are

covered in this part because they're the dimensions of cultural intelligence that most explicitly influence how we live out these ideas.

Adapting our message, our curriculum, and our programs is one thing. But adapting ourselves is the far greater challenge. That's the issue we're most interested in pursuing in this journey together—What does it look like to contextualize ourselves to the various cultures where we find ourselves in any given week? What do we do when we encounter the Other and how do we react to him or her? By "Other" I simply mean those not like us. The Other is a concept developed by the German philosopher Hegel that has been popularized as a way of referring to those different from us. The markers of difference can be racial, geographic, ethnic, economic, or ideological. When thinking of "us" as compared to "them," the "them" is what we mean by the Other. This term can sound pejorative, but it need not be as long as we keep in view that all of us are created in the image of God. Throughout this journey toward more effectively expressing love to the Other, we'll explore the significance of seeing both ourselves and the Other as expressions of who God is. Consistent with its use throughout intercultural studies, the term "Other" is used throughout this book to refer to those coming from a different cultural context, be it a socioethnic culture, an organizational culture, or a generational culture.[6]

We encounter the Other in various ways, all day long, and the Other encounters us. Clearly we can't become experts about every culture we encounter. There are more than five thousand distinct cultural groups in the world. Add to those the many subcultural contexts that exist among various age groups and organizations and the number of distinct cultures in which we minister becomes impossible to quantify. But how might we grow in cultural intelligence so that we can better reflect the love of Jesus in what we say and do as we encounter people who see the world differently than we do, whatever their cultural context? How do we become more multicultural people while still remaining true to who God made us to be? These are the driving questions behind this book.

Rather than simply dump a lot of information on you, I want to invite you into a shared journey using the fascinating pathway of cultural intelligence. I'll share information and examples from my own research and the research of others (see appendix C for research methodology), but along the way we'll stop to reflect on some of the implications for us personally and for the ministries of which we're a part. The goal isn't cultural intelligence in and of itself. Instead, cultural intelligence is the pathway for moving us along in the journey from the desire to love the Other to the ability to express that love in ways that are meaningful and respectful.

Overviews and summaries are provided throughout the book to connect one part to another. Some readers may find these helpful in seeing how all the pieces fit together, while others may find them unnecessary or redundant. I encourage you to engage with the transitional material at whatever level is helpful for your own journey through the book. Appendix A contains a glossary that defines some of the important terms used throughout the book. Grab a journal and keep it nearby as you read. Consider the questions that are posed along the way. And find some peers who will jump into this reading journey with you. Discuss what you encounter on these pages and, more importantly, what you see when looking deep within yourself.

To love, seek to understand, go deep, and express: that is the journey ahead of us. Thanks for joining me in the quest to better love the Other and reflect who Jesus is among the various cultural contexts where we lead and serve.

part 1

love: CQ overview

C ultural intelligence: reaching across the chasm of cultural difference in ways that are loving and respectful.

From my journal:

Cultural Strategic Thinking

Knowledge CQ

Interpretive CQ

LOVE

Desire ——→ Ability

Behavioral CQ

Perseverance CQ

Figure 2

A large, elderly white man. A petite Asian teenager. A woman with a burka and jeans. A skater dude. Those are the last four people who just walked by my window while I was sitting here at Starbucks in Fort Wayne. Fort Wayne, of all places! And now it's a Latin-looking mother and her child. Okay, and a group of very Midwestern-looking professionals. Do any of these people hang out together? Who among them would feel most welcome at the three Christian churches I passed just around the corner on the way here? The world is here! In Fort Wayne, Indiana!

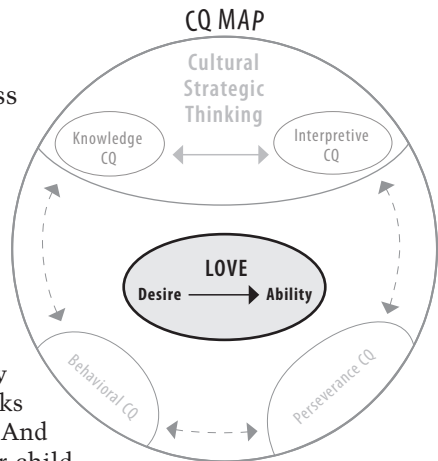—November 19, 2004. Fort Wayne, Indiana

Love. That's our destination. We're on a journey from the desire to love the Other[1] to a place where we effectively *express* the love of Jesus to people of difference. Be encouraged. The desire itself, along with the

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supernatural work of the Holy Spirit, provides the fuel we need to embark on this sojourn.

> Stop and think about what group represents the Other for you. To which culture or subculture do you find it hardest to relate? In what context do the skills that usually come to you naturally feel incredibly awkward and strained? Jot down a few names or examples as we move forward in improving the way we love and serve.

There's something secure and stabilizing about being with people who view the world like us. Laughing together about things we find funny, ranting together about things that tick us off, and sharing an appreciation for some of the same food, art, and perspectives on the world can be the ingredients for building serendipitous memories together. But quite honestly, there's nothing very remarkable about enjoying time with people like ourselves. Everyone fares pretty well there. But to love and appreciate someone who despises the very things we value and vice versa—now that's another story. Yet the real mystery of the gospel lies in how we deal with those relationships of difference.

I can't think of a more scandalous example of friendship than the one shared by Larry Flynt, *Hustler* magazine founder, and Jerry Falwell, the late founder of the fundamentalist Moral Majority. On the day Falwell died, lots of news pundits were brutal with their critiques of his life. But here's what Flynt said: "My mother always told me that no matter how much you dislike a person, when you meet them face-to-face you will find characteristics about them that you like. Jerry Falwell was a perfect example of that. I hated everything he stood for, but after meeting him in person, years after the trial, Jerry Falwell and I became good friends. . . . I always appreciated his sincerity even though I knew what he was selling and he knew what I was selling."[2]

Not to fear. I'm not interested in setting up Falwell or Flynt as examples we're interested in following. But there's something beautiful about Flynt being able to call Falwell a "good friend." And when the gospel comes up close—face-to-face—something mysterious happens. Many fields and disciplines are interested in cultural intelligence. The business world is tapping into the research to become more successful in culturally diverse markets. Government officials are being trained in cultural intelligence to become better at "winning" in foreign settings. And educational institutions want to know how to accomplish learning objectives among students coming from different cultural backgrounds.

But nowhere does cultural intelligence find a better home than in the Christian faith. Sadly, Christendom itself has often created some

of the most notable examples of cultural ignorance. Missionaries have gone into foreign lands insisting that locals adopt dress, use music, and build churches that mirror their own. Older generations have shamed younger generations for the use of inappropriate music genres in worship. And it has been noted far too many times that Sunday morning is the most racially divided time of the week in many American cities. Furthermore, some of the greatest controversies entangling many churches and ministries today revolve around the issue of contextualizing the gospel to various cultural contexts—what's up for grabs and what isn't? Throughout this book, we'll explore several realities facing ministry leaders in contextualizing the gospel to culture. We'll examine both positive and negative examples of how many ministry leaders are responding to these challenges. Rather than perpetuating unloving, disrespectful interactions in these varying cultural contexts, the church can lead the way in authentically expressing love across the chasm of cultural difference.

This first part of the book describes the essential role of cultural intelligence for ministry leaders, whatever their ministry context. There's little need for more information on why cultural intelligence is necessary for people serving internationally. But we want primarily to consider how developing cultural intelligence is becoming an increasingly important skill for ministry leaders serving in places close to home. Before immersing ourselves in the cultural intelligence framework, I want to answer the question, why CQ?

Ultimately the answer is "Love." Jesus synthesized all the teaching of the Law around the greatest commandments, "Love God. Love Others" (see Matt. 22:37–39). *Maitri*, a word for love found in the Sanskrit language, is rooted in the idea that compassion and generosity begin with an individual's *desire* to love. But *maitri* is expressed only when one knows how to move from *desire* to *action*. Based on my research, I'm confident most ministry leaders *want* to love the Other. But gaining the *ability* to love the Other and leading others in our ministries to do the same is the journey we're interested in exploring in this book. That's why love is the center of the CQ map (fig. 2), reminding us that our journey is from the *desire* to love the other to the *ability to express* that love in effective ways. Cultural intelligence is a pathway to help us along the journey from desire to action. It's the bridge that helps us more effectively express and embody Christ's unconditional love across the chasm of cultural difference.

Because we want to live out our love for God and others, cultural intelligence is an essential issue for us in the twenty-first century. Chapter 1 addresses the relevance of cultural intelligence in light of the sociological realities of the twenty-first-century world. We examine the multicolored

mosaic of the communities where we live and minister as the backdrop for our need for cultural intelligence.

Chapter 2 approaches the topic of cultural intelligence from a theological perspective. How do we ensure that we aren't simply selling out to a politically correct view of tolerance toward different cultures and viewpoints? This chapter examines the essential place this topic has continually occupied in the life of Christians and presents a framework for how God contextualized himself to us through Jesus.

Chapter 3 provides an overview of the cultural intelligence framework and examines some of the many helpful theories and approaches to cultural sensitivity and intercultural competence. This chapter compares cultural intelligence with some of the other theories and posits why cultural intelligence is uniquely suited for the challenges facing twenty-first-century ministry leaders at home and abroad. The chapter also provides a brief overview of the four factors of cultural intelligence, each of which are more thoroughly described later in the book.

The first leg of our journey is an exploration into how cultural intelligence helps us live out the primary command to love. Most of us probably don't need much convincing that love for people is central to the Christian life. Loving and serving the Other has always been at the core of living out our God-given mission, even when the Other may be the "Flynt" to our "Falwell." But today more than ever, we need cultural intelligence in order to authentically and effectively express our love for the people we encounter day in and day out.

1

twenty-first-century CQ

Getting Along in the Flat World

I've spent a lot of time over the last few years researching some of the paternalistic, albeit usually unintentional, attitudes reflected in many cross-cultural[1] ministry efforts. The research process has been a bit of a voyeur's dream: going through stacks of journals to read the personal musings of others. I've read the journals of American high school students serving in places such as Mexico, West Virginia, and Kenya. Pastors have allowed me to observe their reflections about their efforts to bridge the racial divides that exist in their communities. Inner-city ministry leaders have shared vulnerable confessions of how it feels to be the recipients of suburbanites' good will. This isn't something I treat lightly. And I've read enough of these that there aren't many reflections that now surprise me. In fact, one of the disappointments has sometimes been the familiarity of what is recorded again and again.

But I was unprepared for the effect that reading one short-term missionary's journal had on me. The observations seemed much like those that I had read before. But this one hit me differently. Here are a few of the excerpts with certain phrases italicized for emphasis:

> **April 10.** The support letters just went out. Now I wait and pray. Lord, I believe you want me to *bring the gospel to these people in the Amazon*. So please provide the monies needed.

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June 20. The money has come in. I'm humbled by the generosity of so many people. . . .

June 22. This is our first day in Iquitos. The challenges began as soon as we landed last night. The airport looked like a dilapidated barn. But they sure took baggage security seriously. They wouldn't let us have our bags until they checked the tags. *I guess they have to do that here; otherwise people would probably steal them.*

June 25. Wow! *The Industrial Revolution obviously skipped this place.* . . . The cool thing is everything is so cheap!

June 27. We're staying in one of the missionary's homes for a couple days while they're away. *If we weren't here, the place would probably be robbed.*

June 29. I spoke at one of the churches today. *They don't speak English* so I had to use an interpreter.

July 3. It was a *productive* day. Two souls were saved.

July 4. It's so weird to be here on the Fourth of July. . . . Being here makes me so thankful for our country. *Why did I get the blessing of being born in America?* What if I had been born here instead?

This short-term missionary demonstrates many of the things I've critiqued throughout the years, such as thinking we're "bringing" the gospel to the Amazon, assuming everyone in a developing country is out to rob us, emphasizing others' inability to speak English rather than our inability to speak the local language, and assuming people aren't "blessed" if they are born outside the United States. The problem is, the short-term missionary who wrote these reflections was me! I discovered this journal a few months ago when I had decided to reread all the journals I've kept over the last several years. As I read the musings I wrote during my first missions trip in 1986, I couldn't believe my eyes. How could it be that my own hand wrote some of the very things I've ranted about elsewhere? It quickly reminded me of my own journey through the fascinating domain of cultural intelligence—reaching across the chasm of cultural difference in ways that are loving and respectful. The journey across the chasm of cultural difference begins with a *desire* to love people of difference but must move toward an *ability* to effectively express that love. It's an ongoing journey for all of us, myself included.

I'm still a far cry from the ideal of cultural intelligence. You'll read many more episodes of cultural ignorance from my life in the pages that

follow. But I'm on the journey toward more lovingly and respectfully interacting with those unlike me. And so are you. The very fact you're reading a book about cultural intelligence gives me hope about your interest in joining many others who want to strengthen how we live in the Way of Jesus as we interact with people unlike us.

The world is more connected than ever. As a result, cross-cultural interactions are no longer the exclusive domain of seminary-trained missionaries or of official, State Department diplomats. We all find ourselves encountering people from vastly different cultural backgrounds. *As a result, cultural clashes and the ability to lovingly relate to one another are some of the critical issues of our day.*

I think most Americans want to be effective cross-culturally. I've interviewed and talked with thousands of Americans about this issue over the last decade, and for the most part, I have found people who desperately want to defy the "ugly American" image. Yet by and large, Americans continue to fare poorly in effectively crossing cultures in ways that cause the people they encounter to feel loved and respected. Unfortunately, there is little difference between the cross-cultural sensitivity of American Christians and that of Americans in general. Some would suggest that Christians fare even worse, but there's little conclusive evidence to support that opinion. Regardless, if there were ever an area where the Christian church should be leading the way, it is in being a living picture of what it looks like to interact with our fellow human beings from different cultural backgrounds in ways that are collaborative, respectful, and loving.

The following findings are a sampling of the recurring sentiments that emerged from my research on the cultural issues facing many churches and ministries. I've included a finding here only if it appeared with enough frequency to make it a noticeable trend among the subjects sampled.[2]

From locals who received North American short-term missionaries:

We're not a zoo of poverty. So please put away your cameras for a while.

You conclude you're communicating effectively because we're paying attention, when we're actually just intrigued by watching your foreign behavior.

We are not naive and backward. . . . Instead we are your brothers and sisters in Christ.

From ethnic minorities to white evangelical churches:

I'd love to be invited to speak at your church about something other than issues of race.

The crime in our neighborhoods is not purely a matter of work ethic. We need your help in breaking the systems of oppression that continue.

I [don't] need [one] more message to the kids in our community that says, *Guess what? This six-year-old white kid got you a better gift than your schmuck of a father did.*

From various generations in the church:

Don't assume that just because we're old, we have nothing to offer anymore. We've given our sweat, blood, and tears to this church. And now we're just being written off.

Please give us a chance to make the faith our own. We'll make our share of mistakes, but our attempts to rethink the gospel are not simply because we're angry and rebellious.

It really gets me when the pastor greets me every week by saying, "Good morning, young lady. How are you today?" Who is he kidding? Does he really think I'm not well aware that he and I both know I'm an old woman? I'm not ashamed of it, so why is he?

From various organizational cultures:

They need to get rid of all their formal titles around this place. We're all equal parts of the body.

Presbyterians are all caught up with their highbrow theology, but they can't live it out.

Pentecostals get all emotional, but it's hard to find much intellectual substance.

It is unfair to list these statements without more context. Several of them will show up later in the book with further explanation about what the subject was trying to communicate. For now, my point is that there isn't much love experienced or expressed by the thoughts and feelings represented in these comments.

Be encouraged though. If you and the people in your ministry have the desire to love people of difference, you can move toward more effectively expressing that love cross-culturally. These kinds of indicting statements don't have to be the norm in your ministry. Through cultural intelligence, we can move beyond good intentions to actually serving cross-culturally in ways that are truly loving and transforming for everyone involved.

As we begin our journey toward becoming more culturally intelligent leaders, our first step is to explore some of the reasons why cultural intelligence is an essential skill in the twenty-first century. We'll look at

the growth of world travel, the multicultural complexities facing those given international work assignments (missionaries, business expatriates, ESL teachers, etc.), and the many cultural groups that exist in our own communities.

One Billion Frequent Fliers

Our growing awareness of catastrophic hurricanes, tsunamis, and terrorist threats seems to have little sway on our urge to travel around the world. Back in 1995, just over 550 million tourist visas were issued around the world. The number has steadily climbed since then with only a slight lapse in worldwide travel after the September 11 attacks on New York and Washington. Today, nearly 1 billion tourist visas are issued annually, and the number keeps rising every year. That means at least one out of every six people in the world travel to other countries each year, and many of the remaining population are hosting the travelers who come. The desire to travel apparently trumps fear of natural or man-made dangers.[3]

Also, softer borders and cheap airfares between European countries have boosted travel throughout Europe. And singles, couples, and families from all kinds of places are packing their bags to scuba dive in the Maldives, mountain climb in Nepal, and watch wildlife in Kenya.

It used to be only the senior-level executives of large multinational corporations like IBM and Coca-Cola who traveled internationally. Today, international flights are filled with start-up entrepreneurs doing business in Mexico, China, and Bosnia. And mid-level managers and salespeople are increasingly traveling abroad for work in the flattened world, a concept popularized by journalist Thomas Friedman in his best-selling book *The World Is Flat*.[4] Friedman argues that the competitive playing fields between industrial and emerging markets are leveling. Regardless of how you feel about Friedman's economics, any ministry leader in the developed world needs to read this book to get a glimpse of how the businesspeople in our ministries are affected by globalization and technology. Business professionals are learning that global activity is essential to survival in the flattened world. As a result, every day people are being faced with a need to interact with others from different cultures in ways that are loving and respectful.

Worldwide travel spills over into other areas as well. Students and teachers in universities are learning and teaching abroad for periods ranging from a couple of weeks to a year or longer. Conferences for all kinds of professional organizations are held in international locations

with delegates from many places. And pastors are expected to participate in and lead short-term missions trips.

In fact, much of the worldwide travel by American Christians happens under the umbrella of short-term missions. Nearly one-third of all American high school students participate in some kind of religious cross-cultural experience before they graduate from high school. It's hard to be deemed a legitimate church ministry for youth these days without running a full-fledged, short-term missions program. More than 5.5 million thirteen- to seventeen-year-old Americans have cumulatively gone on more than 11.5 million mission trips. This involves more than 2 million trips a year just for this age bracket.[5] However, few Christian colleges and universities train youth ministry students in skills such as cultural intelligence; therefore, youth leaders are often underequipped to handle the cross-cultural challenges confronting them.

Though short-term missionaries are most often high school and college students, more and more families, adults, and senior citizens are participating as well. According to Princeton sociologist of religion Robert Wuthnow, about 1.6 million American *adult* church members (Protestants and Catholics) participated in short-term missions trips outside the United States during 2005. And an additional unknown number of American Christians traveled within the United States doing similar kinds of work in cross-cultural contexts, such as rebuilding efforts in New Orleans, development work in West Virginia, or evangelistic outreaches in New York City. Most short-term missions trips are two weeks or less, a period that fits well with school holidays or annual vacations. In contrast to the millions of short-term missionaries traveling annually, approximately sixty thousand long-term American missionaries are living overseas.

Though the short-term-missionary phenomenon seems to have the most momentum in the United States and Canada, it has parallel movements in other parts of the world. Christians in the United Kingdom, Australia, South Korea, and Singapore, as well as Russia, Uganda, Guatemala, and other countries are also traveling around the world on short-term missions trips. For example, between January and September 2005, twenty thousand Koreans participated in two-week short-term missions trips to Mongolia, typically in groups of thirty to eighty people at a time.[6]

I am part of a small but growing research community that has been gathering data and assessing the efficacy of short-term missions.[7] The questionable motivation behind many trips, the paternalistic interactions that often occur, and the increasing amounts of money spent are reasons for concern. Many studies raise questions about whether anything positive results from these trips for the local communities that receive the missionaries.[8] Some receiving communities view short-term missions groups as being primarily a way to enlist needed funds. Other missionaries and

national pastors report the ways the same people in their neighborhoods "get converted" week after week as one group after another proselytizes them.

Some researchers even question the transformative impact on the participants that the trips are alleged to have. There is no increase in the number of people enlisting in long-term missionary service as a result of their short-term missions experiences. Longitudinal studies examining the prayer lives, giving habits, and evangelistic pursuits of short-term missionaries after they return home find little difference from the missionaries' behaviors before their trips. And in some cases, short-term missions trips perpetuate the ethnocentrism of participants rather than subverting it.[9] Short-term missionaries often travel to Mexico to show love to the locals there for ten days and return home isolated from the Mexicans living in their own communities. Worse yet, some short-term missionaries continue to discriminate against ethnic groups at home while lavishing love and attention on people they encounter abroad.

Much more needs to be understood about the short-term missions phenomenon. But researchers continue to find that the effectiveness of short-term missions is positively related to the participants' personal growth in cultural intelligence.[10] And those leading short-term missions trips need to develop their cultural intelligence and learn how to help other participants do so as well. Cultural intelligence is one of the most important means of making short-term missions an effective tool for mission and formation for everyone involved.

Moving Abroad

In contrast to the relatively new phenomenon of short-term missions, long-term missionaries have been dealing with cross-cultural issues for centuries. And business professionals with overseas assignments have been engaged in cross-cultural encounters for a few decades. But the cross-cultural challenges facing these groups are also growing. It used to be that an American missionary going to work in Brazil typically joined a group of other American missionaries to work in the same culture. There were often numerous Brazilian subcultures about which American missionaries needed to learn, such as urban life in São Paulo and Brasília and the tribal customs of people living along the Amazon. But the focus of missionaries' cross-cultural learning was relatively clear—"How does an American interact with Brazilian culture(s)?"

Today, more often than not, an American missionary goes to a field where he or she joins missionaries from a variety of other places around the world. Given that 50 percent of missionaries today originate from places

other than North America and Western Europe, an American missionary working in Azerbaijan may well be joined by Filipino, Brazilian, Swedish, Guatemalan, and Nigerian missionaries. So those missionaries must become people who not only seek to understand the cultural dynamics of working in Azerbaijan but also grasp the dynamics of working with associates from all those various cultures. For several decades, missions agencies have reported that the number one problem experienced by missionaries is getting along with their missionary colleagues. Add a diversity of cultures to an already conflict-laden relationship, and you can understand why cultural intelligence is essential for effective missionary service.

A similar challenge faces business professionals. No longer is a Singaporean who is an international businessperson solely working with Japanese in Tokyo or Americans in Minneapolis. More often than not, Singaporean business leaders on expatriate assignments work with associates from numerous different national backgrounds wherever they go. The number of cultural contexts in which a missionary or a businessperson works on an overseas assignment has become increasingly diverse. Cultural intelligence is uniquely suited to help us and those with whom we serve respond to the barrage of intercultural interactions facing us.

We Aren't in Kansas Anymore, or Are We?

Meanwhile, most of us need cultural intelligence back home in our own communities. Imagine you go to a Saturday morning farmers' market. In front of you is just what you might expect—a fair-skinned farmer wearing coveralls who is selling sweet corn. But to his right is a Vietnamese couple selling long beans and fresh lemongrass. And on the other side of him is a veiled Yemeni woman selling herbs and spices to a Latino guy wearing a "Big Red" jacket. You might guess I'm describing a scene from a farmers' market in New York City, Seattle, or even Chicago. But I'm describing the farmers' market in Lincoln, Nebraska. Lincoln, a city whose natives used to proudly describe it as "the middle of nowhere," is now home to public schools where students represent more than fifty different nationalities, speaking thirty-two different languages as their first language.[11]

While coastal cities like Seattle, Los Angeles, and New York have experienced some of the greatest internationalization in the United States, the colorful additions of Asians, Africans, and Latinos are also moving into neighborhoods throughout the heartland of the country. I live in the small city of Grand Rapids, Michigan. For several decades, this community was predominantly Dutch American. Fifteen years ago, 3 percent of the population here was Hispanic. Today, more than 17 percent

of the Grand Rapids population is Hispanic. And the Asian population in Grand Rapids increased 26 percent in the last decade.[12]

Today, one out of every seven Americans[13] is Hispanic. And soon the ratio will be one in four. By 2016, more than one-third of Americans will be people of color. The color shift in the United States is coming not just from Hispanics, however. High schools will soon routinely offer Hindi and Mandarin, as a growing number of Asians become a more significant part of the American population. Neighborhoods, churches, schools, and businesses are all experiencing the shift from a largely monocultural populace to an increasingly diverse one.

Youth ministries don't need to go on a short-term missions trip to encounter different cultures. The percentage of students in American public schools who are considered part of a racial or ethnic minority group nearly doubled between 1972 and 2003, from 22 percent to 42 percent.[14] Even a predominately white youth ministry likely includes students from a variety of racial groups if it is committed to ministering to the youth in its community.

Fair-skinned sixteen-year-olds are bagging groceries alongside Sudanese refugees in small-town grocery stores across the United States. College students attend class with peers from around the world. And American assembly-line workers are sharing the line with Bosnians, Laotians, and Cubans.

Even if you live in one of the rare communities with very little ethnic diversity, cultural differences exist in other ways in nearly every pocket of the United States and in most other places around the world. For example, in addition to socioethnic culture, two other cultural domains we will explore in the journey across the chasm of cultural difference include organizational and generational cultures. Many ministry leaders fail because they don't understand the strong cultural values and assumptions that underlie the behaviors of an organization. Just as in a socioethnic culture, people often behave within these organizations with little self-awareness, oblivious of the values and assumptions driving their behavior. And few issues are challenging the pastors with whom I speak throughout the United States as much as that of how to deal with the passionate differences between the generational cultures within their churches. Music preferences, teaching styles, programmatic emphases, missionary strategies, and hermeneutics are but a few of the areas where cultural intelligence is needed to successfully pastor a congregation filled with people from different cultural backgrounds. The challenges created by the cultural differences among various generational groups can equal some of those created by various socioethnic groups. We'll more fully explore some of the leadership issues involved with these cultural groups in chapter 6.

Throughout the journey of this book, just as in real life, we will move in and out of socioethnic cultures, generational cultures, and organizational cultures. Numerous other cultural contexts exist in our lives as well, including cultures organized by professional careers, gender-oriented cultures, and cultures characterized by sexual preference and socioeconomic difference. There isn't space in this book to legitimately deal with all these varied contexts, but cultural intelligence can be applied to these cultural settings too.

Let's use a youth leader to think about the reasons a twenty-first-century ministry leader needs cultural intelligence. In addition to serving youth from various ethnic backgrounds, a youth worker also deals with the generational divides between the youth, their parents, and the seniors in the church. On top of that, the youth pastor must learn the culture of the particular church and possibly the denomination of which it is a part. Who holds the power, how is conflict handled, and what are the sacred rituals? But then add to these differences the subcultures among the youth themselves, whether they be jocks, goths, rave enthusiasts, techies, or preppies. Increasingly youth base their cultural identity on issues such as sexual preference, social class, and musical genre. And then the youth leader must deal with the upcoming missions trip to Mexico. And the invitation to partner with an urban youth ministry nearby. And the overriding tension felt by youth pastors to engage students with the gospel while struggling to relate the church culture from which they operate to the all-pervasive popular culture and Internet-linked world in which students feel most at home.[15] Get the picture? Cultural intelligence relates to the everyday realities of life in the twenty-first century.

Conclusion

Latinos are eating sushi, and Thais are eating tacos. Danish journalists are exercising their freedom of speech at the expense of respecting the sanctity of Islamic religious figures. As the world becomes more connected than ever, cross-cultural interactions are becoming the critical issue of our day.

Cultural intelligence isn't something needed only by those with a heart for the so-called mission field. It's needed by ministry leaders all across the United States. Eddie Gibbs, senior professor of church growth at Fuller Seminary, writes, "Local church leaders are trained to be teachers and pastors of their flock rather than cross-cultural missionaries to their broader contexts."[16] We must learn to live alongside sincere followers of other faiths, engage in ongoing conversations, and work together on issues of mutual concern while faithfully witnessing to the reign of God.[17] Otherwise, we'll be left behind by this unavoidable new reality.

Maybe by now you're feeling overwhelmed. Our local communities are being broadened to include Hispanics, former refugees, and international students. Our short-term missions trips are taking us to places where we'll encounter another mosaic of ethnicities. And our youth groups might consist of fifteen different subcultures. Do we have to become cultural experts on every one of these groups? Obviously that's impossible. But reaching across the chasm of cultural difference and lovingly relating to those we encounter isn't impossible. In fact, all kinds of everyday ministry leaders are making great strides in more effectively loving and serving the Other.

Picture the kind of people most difficult for you to love. What do they look like? How do they smell? What do they believe? How do they act? If they have flesh and blood, they aren't your enemy. They're fellow human beings. Look at how you encounter the Other, and you get a glimpse into what it means to live as we were created to live.

The flattened world is bringing us more and more encounters with people who aren't like us. We cannot hope to become experts on every cultural context in which we find ourselves. But through cultural intelligence, we can enhance our ability to interact with one another in ways that are respectful, loving, and dignifying. Herein lies the essence of the gospel.

> Think about the five to ten different cultural contexts you most regularly encounter. What ethnic cultures are represented in your community and in your work life? Where do you travel and who do you encounter? What organizational cultures do you engage week by week? What generational dynamics do you face among your family and friends? These are the groups we want to relate to in ways that best reflect Jesus.

Recommended Resources

Friedman, Thomas. *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2005.

Livermore, David. *Serving with Eyes Wide Open: Doing Short-Term Missions with Cultural Intelligence*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006.

Pipher, Mary. *The Middle of Everywhere: The World's Refugees Come to Our Town.* New York: Harcourt, 2002.

US Census Bureau, http://www.census.gov/.