

DBA Dissertation

Fostering Collective Cultural Intelligence in Multicultural Teams: A Practice-Based Approach

Submitted by Degree Candidate

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the development of collective cultural intelligence within multicultural teams adopting a practice-based approach. It tackles the challenge of creating effective, culturally intelligent teams and how they manage issues like miscommunication, differing cultural norms, and conflicting work practices. The empirical setting for this study is an international minor for undergraduate students working on complex projects in multicultural teams.

The research follows a four-phase approach: (1) data collection, (2) data analysis, (3) designing and implementing a method to facilitate the development of collective cultural intelligence, and (4) validating this method. Rooted in interpretivist philosophy and utilizing a case study design, this longitudinal study acknowledges the dynamic and context-specific situated nature of culture. Data sources include observations, interviews, questionnaires, and various forms of documentation providing a nuanced understanding of the topic. The method of analysis used is thematic analysis.

Key processes identified for developing collective cultural intelligence include informal social interaction driven by curiosity, which fosters strong interpersonal relationships and mutual respect. Trust is crucial in encouraging accountability, open expression of opinions, and information sharing. Open communication practices and regular feedback sessions enhance team organization. Structured planning with flexibility accommodates diverse team needs. Balancing work and leisure through humor and shared enjoyment, referred to here as relational levity, fosters bonding and contributes to a positive team atmosphere. Collectively,

these processes enable team members to cultivate a deeper understanding of cultural differences, enhance their adaptability to new cultural contexts, and strengthen their collaborative competences.

The study advances a multi-level understanding of how cultural intelligence is fostered through interactions that are contextually situated and grounded in intersubjective meaning-making. It offers new insights into the negotiated culture perspective, illustrating how team members co-create cultural practices through dialogue and informal negotiation. The study also highlights the relevance of relational levity and identifies the phenomenon of *local's myopia*, where local team members struggle to adapt to multicultural dynamics, even within their own cultural context.

Practically, it presents a framework for enhancing collective cultural intelligence, emphasizing cultural metacognition, contextual sensitivity, and psychological safety. It further proposes experiential training interventions, including team-based games, as effective tools for supporting its development.

Keywords: Cultural intelligence, team processes, cultural metacognition, multicultural team, negotiated culture, self-managed team, interpretive approach.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS

Introduction

Understanding and embracing cultural difference is no longer a niche skill, it is a core requirement for thriving in today's increasingly interdependent world. Globalization, transnational migration, remote work, international education, and rapidly shifting geopolitical dynamics mean that people from diverse cultural backgrounds interact more frequently than ever before, often in situations where collaboration is essential to addressing complex societal and organizational challenges. These intercultural encounters bring a variety of beliefs, values, and assumptions about what constitutes appropriate behavior and effective cooperation (Thomas & Inkson, 2017). As such, the ability to navigate cultural complexity and to act with cultural intelligence is not merely a tool for enhancing performance but a fundamental competence for peaceful coexistence, mutual understanding, and sustainable global problem-solving.

Since the rise of internationalization in the latter half of the 20th century, the global work environment has seen the emergence of new organizational forms, including multicultural teams as key units of innovation and decision-making (Leung & Wang, 2015). This development has driven increasing interest in intercultural competence across fields such as management, education, healthcare, and policy.

The Topic

Researchers in cross-cultural management and related disciplines have developed models to conceptualize the competencies needed to navigate cultural difference, ranging from personality traits and attitudes to communication styles and behavioral strategies (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009). Among these, cultural intelligence (CQ), introduced by Earley (2002) and further developed by Earley and Ang (2003), has emerged as a particularly influential model, grounded in cognitive frameworks, especially multiple-intelligences theory (Gardner, 1983; Sternberg, 1985; Sternberg et al., 2000). This led to renewed empirical and theoretical research in the field, including Thomas's (2006) development of a more process-oriented model of cultural intelligence, which conceptualizes cultural competence as arising from dynamic interactions within specific contexts.

Two decades of research on cultural intelligence (CQ) have generated a substantial body of knowledge, which has been examined in several systematic literature reviews. These reviews highlight developments in the construct's definition, measurement, antecedents, development, and outcomes as well as its application at the aggregate level (Fang et al., 2018; Ott & Michailova, 2018). Fang et al.'s review found that 90% of the empirical publications (128 out of 142) employed quantitative methods compared to 14 studies using qualitative methods. Furthermore, most studies focus on the individual level of analysis resulting in a lack of research on CQ at the team or organizational level. Torkko's (2020) systematic literature review on CQ in multicultural teams identified only 17 articles for review. However, to cope with complex challenges in the globalized world of business, organizations are frequently deploying multicultural teams. Teamwork in general has become the cornerstone of productivity and innovation in modern workplaces. Achieving cultural intelligence at the team level can result in enhanced collaboration and communication, increased innovation and creativity, stronger team cohesion and conflict resolutions skills (Liao & Thomas, 2020).

Hence, in my view, the dominance of quantitative methods and the narrow focus on individual level of analysis not only limits our theoretical understanding but also constrains the practical relevance of CQ research. Multicultural teams are not just aggregates of culturally intelligent individuals, they are socially dynamic environments, where understanding, trust, and collaboration must be negotiated and constructed collectively through interaction. As such, it is critical to explore how cultural intelligence emerges as a collective and relational process, shaped by context, communication, and co-created meaning.

Problem Definition

It is therefore essential to understand the development of cultural intelligence at the team level, as it enables multicultural teams to effectively navigate the complexities of diverse and global work environments.

Although the relevance of multicultural teamwork has increased across sectors such as business, education, and policy, our understanding of how cultural intelligence operates in such settings remains limited. While existing research has laid a strong foundation at the individual level, far less is known about the collective processes through which teams develop the ability to engage across cultural differences. In real-life team settings, this involves ongoing adaptation, mutual learning, and co-construction of shared meaning, phenomena that are difficult to capture through traditional, outcome-focused research designs.

Further complicating the picture is the ambivalence in literature regarding the effects of cultural diversity. Scholars widely describe it as a ‘double-edged sword’ (Stahl & Maznevski, 2021): when managed well, multicultural teams can outperform homogeneous ones in terms of creativity, innovation, and problem-solving (Wang et al., 2019); when poorly managed, they are more vulnerable to miscommunication, interpersonal tension, and underperformance. Cultural intelligence has been proposed as a key resource for bridging these challenges and enabling teams to translate diversity into strength (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008).

Yet the question of how culturally intelligent teams form, and under what conditions collective cultural intelligence can emerge in practice, remains underexplored. Most existing work focuses on final outcomes, rather than the unfolding interpersonal processes that shape them. This study responds to that gap by examining cultural intelligence not as a fixed trait, but as a collective, situated, and intersubjective process, embedded in the day-to-day interactions of multicultural teams.

Expanding theoretical and practical knowledge about cultural intelligence has significant implications for both broader society and the business sector. There is a pressing need to develop intercultural competencies across multiple domains of life including political, educational, organizational, military, health, and counselling contexts (Gelfand et al., 2015). Misinterpretations and intolerance of cultural differences often underlie discrimination and conflict. Cultural clashes and hostilities often arise from cultural fanaticism, lack of awareness, perceived social injustice, and communication gaps (Sharma and Hussain, 2017). Conversely, culturally intelligent individuals possess empathy and the ability to understand and adjust to new perspectives, fostering inclusive and peaceful coexistence in increasingly multicultural societies.

Moreover, cultivating cultural intelligence, especially at team level, can yield several positive outcomes within any organization dealing with diversity. These include personal adjustment indicated by feelings of contentment and wellbeing; good interpersonal relationships with culturally diverse individuals; and effective completion of task-related goals, which signifies effective interaction in cross-cultural settings (Thomas et al., 2008). Teams that are equipped to navigate cultural difference with openness and mutual respect contribute not only to organizational goals but also to inclusive learning environments and work cultures where diversity is viewed as an asset rather than a challenge.

The Research Question

In response to calls for new research approaches driven by personal interest and intellectual curiosity, my study explores how cultural intelligence emerges collectively within multicultural teams. The goal is to generate a richer theoretical understanding and inform more grounded practices for supporting intercultural team development.

It is in light of these considerations that I formulated the following research question:

How can we foster collective cultural intelligence in multicultural teams?

This question is addressed through the following sub-questions, each of which targets a specific dimension of the phenomenon:

1. What inherent challenges arise during the formation of multicultural teams, and how are they addressed?
2. What processes lead to the emergence of culturally intelligent team behavior?
3. What kinds of interventions or facilitative conditions support the development of collective cultural intelligence?

This study thus takes the team as the primary unit of analysis, focusing on intra-team processes through which collective cultural intelligence emerges. While individual experiences and contextual influences are acknowledged, the emphasis lies on how team members jointly construct understanding and develop shared practices. This multi-level approach is grounded in the interpretivist belief that knowledge and competencies arise through socially constructed and intersubjective processes (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

Overview of Research Methodology

To achieve the research objective this study adopts an exploratory research design utilizing qualitative methods embedded in a case study framework. This design reflects a process-oriented ontological perspective, which understands reality as fluid, co-created, and continually unfolding through human interaction (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Cultural

intelligence, in this view, is not a fixed attribute to be measured, but a dynamic capability that evolves in context, through reflective dialogue and shared experience. Guided by interpretivist research philosophy, I believe that human beings actively construct meaning through their interactions with others and their environments. People from different cultural backgrounds, in different contexts, and at different times, interpret and create meaning in diverse ways (Saunders et al., 2019). I am committed to acknowledging this complexity by exploring multiple perspectives.

This interpretive orientation naturally aligns with the study's focus on the relational dynamics within multicultural teams. Central to this study is the idea that cultural intelligence is not simply a set of individual traits, but rather a relational and emergent capacity that is co-constructed through intersubjective processes (Thomas & Inkson, 2017). In this view, meaning is not individually held but shaped through ongoing interactions, negotiations, and mutual understanding among team members. These intersubjective encounters, particularly when navigating differences, serve as catalysts for the development of collective cultural intelligence.

I assume a dual role as both researcher and participant in the learning community, engaging in observation, administering qualitative questionnaires, conducting semi-structured interviews, and analyzing data through thematic analysis. The study spans over two years including four cohorts of international students attending a minor program abroad. These business students face several cultural challenges while adjusting to the new social and learning environment similar to those of global managers at their first grips with culturally diverse stakeholders. Throughout the semester, lasting for about five months, they work in multicultural teams on challenging and complex real-life business assignments. I use the same setting to test and validate an intervention designed to facilitate the emergence of cultural intelligence in multicultural teams.

Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is organized as follows:

Chapter 1: This chapter serves as an introduction to the thesis, outlining the broader context within which the concept of cultural intelligence has developed. It highlights the theoretical gap in existing literature and underscores the significance of the study. Following the articulation of the research objectives and questions, a concise overview of the research approach is provided.

Chapter 2: Literature review provides a broad overview of scholarly work on cultural intelligence, multicultural teams, and the factors that contribute to their success. It identifies key gaps in literature and introduces the theoretical framework guiding the study.

Chapter 3: Methodology details research design, the data methods employed, and the analytical techniques used in this study. It outlines the longitudinal field study approach, the exposition of the tool designed to foster cultural intelligence, and the rationale behind the chosen methods.

Chapter 4: Findings presents the key results from the research focusing on how multicultural teams address their intercultural challenges, and the team processes that lead to the development of collective cultural intelligence in these teams. Additionally, it presents some insights into the complex nature of multicultural teamwork in this specific research setting, such as the position of the local members.

Chapter 5: Discussion reflects on the implications of the findings and the contributions of the study in relation to the research question and the existing literature highlighting the role of cultural metacognition, the dynamic nature of cultural intelligence, and the relevance of specific contexts. It explores the practical application of the results for organizations, addresses the limitations of the study, and suggests avenues for further research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In this chapter I provide a review of the literature relevant to cultural intelligence (CQ) and multicultural teams, thus addressing the problem statement and research questions of this thesis. I endeavor to analyze the proposed core concepts, their dimensions, and relationships in order to identify gaps in the current theoretical thinking and contribute to the enrichment of theory and managerial practices. The review leads to a conceptual framework as guidance for the formulation of my initial propositions.

Conceptualization of Cultural Intelligence

Cultural intelligence (CQ) is a concept that has its roots in cross-cultural psychology but has gained substantial interest in the fields of international business and management (Yari et al., 2020). While it aligns with the broader tradition of intercultural competence research, CQ stands out due to its strong theoretical basis and frequent citation in scholarly literature (Fang et al., 2018). This construct addresses the need to transcend mere descriptions and explanations of cultural differences, focusing instead on identifying capabilities that bridge these differences (Ang et al., 2015).

Over the past two decades, two main conceptual models of CQ have been proposed: the four-factor model by Earley and Ang (2003) and the process-oriented model by Thomas et al. (2008). Each of these models presents a unique approach to understanding and measuring cultural intelligence, with various scholars contributing to the ongoing debate about the most effective conceptualization.

The Four-Factor Model of Cultural Intelligence

Earley and Ang (2003) defined cultural intelligence as an individual's capability to function and manage effectively in culturally diverse settings. They grounded their construct in the theories of multiple intelligences that focus on specific content domains, such as social intelligence, emotional intelligence, and practical intelligence (Gardner, 1983; Sternberg, 1985). Social and emotional intelligence exhibit attributes similar to cultural intelligence, particularly the notion that intelligence is inherently multidimensional, encompassing both behavioral and cognitive components. Nevertheless, social and emotional intelligence are typically regarded as products of, and confined to, the culture within which they are cultivated and do not necessarily relate to cross-cultural interactions. In contrast, cultural intelligence (CQ) is conceptualized as a general capability, enabling individuals to adapt their behavior repertoire based on the situational context (Thomas, 2006).

At a broad level this cultural intelligence model comprises four factors: (1) metacognitive CQ, or one's mental capability to acquire and understand cultural knowledge; (2) cognitive CQ, or one's knowledge about cultures and cultural differences; (3) motivational CQ, or one's capability to direct and sustain effort toward functioning in intercultural situations; and (4) behavioral CQ, or one's capacity for behavioral flexibility in cross-cultural interactions (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008; Earley & Ang, 2003). Each CQ factor describes a capability that facilitates intercultural effectiveness (Rockstuhl & Van Dyne, 2018).

Van Dyne et al. (2015) envision metacognitive CQ as an individual's cultural consciousness and awareness during interactions with those from different cultural backgrounds. They consider it a critical component for at least three reasons. First, it promotes active thinking about people and situations when cultural backgrounds differ. Second, it triggers critical thinking about habits, assumptions, and culturally bound thinking. Third, it allows individuals

to evaluate and revise their mental maps, consequently increasing the accuracy of their understanding.

The cognitive aspect includes declarative and procedural knowledge as well as inductive and analogical reasoning and social perception. It involves knowledge at universal, cultural, and situational levels. Universal knowledge is abstract and general, while cultural knowledge is specific to particular cultural contexts. As far as reasoning is concerned, inductive reasoning derives general principles from specific observations and analogical reasoning draws conclusions from similar situations (Liao & Thomas, 2020).

Earley and Ang (2003) argue that cultural intelligence requires a person to be motivated to engage in the new culture, therefore cultural intelligence requires both intelligence and motivated action. Cultural intelligence is reflected in the self-concept, which motivates adaptation to new cultural surroundings. These self-motives include enhancement, the motive to feel good about oneself and to maintain self-esteem; self-efficacy, the belief that one has about accomplishing some tasks (Bandura, 1986), and consistency, the desire to maintain consistent ideas and behaviors, which can negatively impact cultural adaptation*.

Additionally, personal and cultural values have an impact on the way an individual responds to the social environment and can aid the adjustment to it.

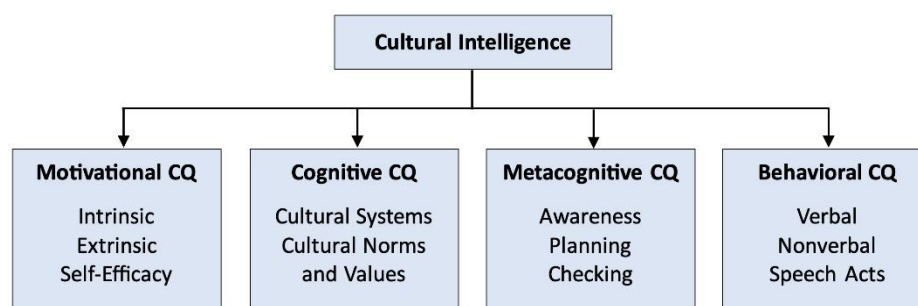
In terms of behavioral CQ, Early and Ang refer to observable, overt behavior. They define culturally intelligent behavior as “purposive, motive-oriented, and strategic, while culturally competent behaviors are passive, non-conscious, less agentic” (Earley & Ang, 2003, p. 159).

*The term cultural adaptation is central to cultural intelligence studies as CQ emphasizes the ability to adjust one’s behaviors and strategies in cross-cultural situations. It highlights flexibility and the ability to effectively modify communication, behaviors, and actions depending on cultural norms.

Therefore, culturally intelligent individuals are active, conscious, and mindful in the way they act across cultures (Liao and Thomas, 2020). They are good at self-presentation which is motivated by influencing others' feelings and beliefs. It also enables individuals to be more mindful of how their behavior impacts culturally different others. Rather than specifying behavioral competencies, Earley and Ang emphasize the need for a repertoire of verbal and nonverbal responses. Successful adaptation involves identifying and attending to impressions made on others through appropriate social behaviors (Liao and Thomas, 2020).

This CQ construct, expanded by Van Dyne et al. (2012) to include 11 sub-dimensions, represents a coherent theoretical approach to literature on intercultural competencies. It has been extensively researched with the 20-item Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS) (Ang et al., 2007), which in turn went through multiple validation processes. This psychometric tool was further refined into E-CQS, the expanded cultural intelligence scale befitting the 11 sub-dimensions. Each of the sub-dimensions suggests specific capabilities that people can consider when they reflect on their own cultural intelligence and that of others.

FIGURE 1 Four-Factor Model by Van Dyne et al. (2012)



Despite the comprehensive nature of the four-factor CQ model, there is no clear consensus on its conceptualization and modeling. Bückner et al. (2015) proposed a two-dimensional CQ model, combining items from the original four-factor CQS (Ang et al., 2007) into dimensions of internalized cultural knowledge and effective cultural flexibility. This model was validated

on samples of Chinese and Dutch international students (Bücker, Furrer, & Weem, 2016).

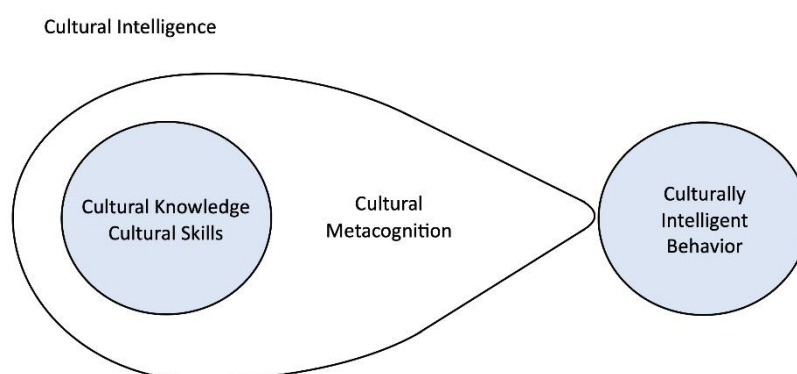
More recently, Rockstuhl and Van Dyne (2018) advanced a bi-factor CQ model, accounting for the effects of a latent CQ factor and specific CQ factors.

Critical evaluations of the four-factor model highlight the need for methodological diversity and question the methodologies used to operationalize CQ. Blasco et al. (2012) argue that CQ is a "descriptive-prescriptive" construct rather than one developed from empirical observations of exemplars. They question the significance assigned to the metacognitive dimension and the assumption that conflicts in intercultural communications undermine CQ. Additionally, they express doubts about the trainable nature of CQ. Leung et al. (2014) also call for research on how decontextualized competencies translate into effective behaviors in specific intercultural contexts.

The Process-Oriented Model of Cultural Intelligence

Thomas et al. (2008) propose a process-oriented approach that conceptualizes cultural intelligence as an interconnected system of interacting abilities rather than a mere aggregation of individual dimensions (Sharma & Hussain, 2017). Their model emphasizes the interaction between knowledge and skills, facilitated by cultural metacognition, allowing the construct to emerge.

FIGURE 2 Process-Oriented Model by Thomas et al. (2008)



Their approach begins with the desired outcome of culturally intelligent behavior, which is effective intercultural interactions. These interactions encompass three key aspects: personal adjustment indicated by feelings of contentment and well-being, the development and maintenance of positive interpersonal relationships with culturally diverse individuals, and the successful completion of task-related goals in different cultural contexts.

The knowledge component, which emphasizes cultural content, structures, and influence processes, parallels the cognitive component described by Earley and Ang (2003). Both frameworks focus on the ability to identify the defining characteristics of a culture that distinguish it from others.

The skills component in Thomas et al.'s model is dynamic and evolves through learning and social interaction. Compared to Earley and Ang's concept, it is broader and includes perceptual, relational, and adaptive skills. Perceptual skills involve recognizing cultural differences and demonstrating open-mindedness, tolerance of uncertainty, and a non-judgmental attitude. Relational skills include flexible thinking, sociability, and empathy, which facilitate establishing positive relationships with individuals from different cultures and learning from these interactions. Adaptive skills encompass selecting appropriate behaviors from a behavioral repertoire and generating new behaviors suitable for cross-cultural contexts, as well as facilitating a positive attitude among culturally diverse individuals. This component subsumes Earley and Ang's concept of behavioral CQ (Sharma & Hussain, 2017).

The most critical component of CQ is cultural metacognition, defined as knowledge of and control over one's thinking and learning activities within the cultural domain (Flavell, 1979). This higher-order cognitive skill aligns with Sternberg's (1985, 1997) notion that intelligence involves selecting and shaping environmental contexts. Cultural metacognition operates through cognitive self-regulation, abstraction of specific knowledge, focusing on cognitive resources, and compensating for individual knowledge and skills (Liao & Thomas, 2020).

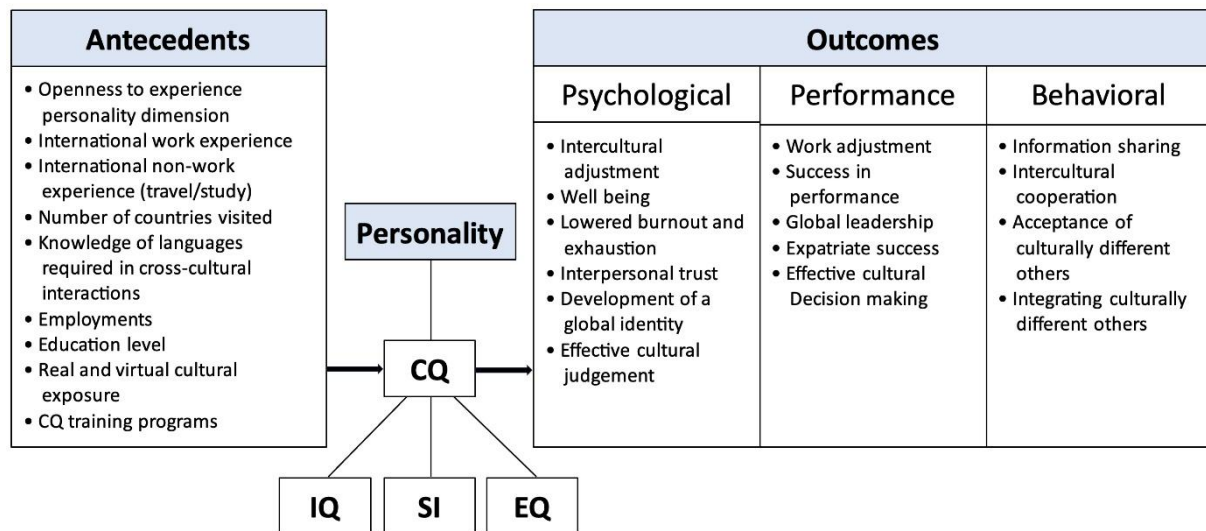
Thomas et al. define CQ as a system of interacting knowledge and skills, linked by cultural metacognition, enabling individuals to adapt to, and shape the cultural aspects of their environment. While this model does not explicitly specify motivational or behavioral components, these are implicitly present through the regulation of cognitive activities and the appropriate behavior resulting from the CQ process.

The model is evaluated using a multi-method approach that includes self-reports of cultural knowledge, assessments of the cognitive complexity of this knowledge, self-reports of intercultural skills, and process trace assessments of cultural metacognition through video stimuli (Thomas et al., 2008). This complex assessment method presents significant challenges, which may account for the limited number of empirical studies employing this approach. To address these limitations, Thomas et al. proposed the Short Form Measure of Cultural Intelligence (SFCQ), aiming to create a rigorously developed measure that surpasses the limitations of existing models (Thomas et al., 2015). This concise instrument is intended to enhance the utility of assessing intercultural effectiveness.

Thomas et al.'s model reflects the dynamic nature of CQ and thus resonates better with my research philosophy. Development is achieved through learning from social experiences and appreciating critical cultural differences between oneself and others (Thomas et al., 2008). It also emphasizes the ability to change the context of cultural interaction, rather than merely displaying context-appropriate behavior (Sharma & Hussain, 2017).

In their systematic literature review on the current status and future direction of CQ Sharma and Hussain (2017) they summarize their empirical findings in the following figure:

FIGURE 3 Summary empirical findings by CQ Sharma and Hussain (2017)



Cultural Diversity and Effective Collaboration

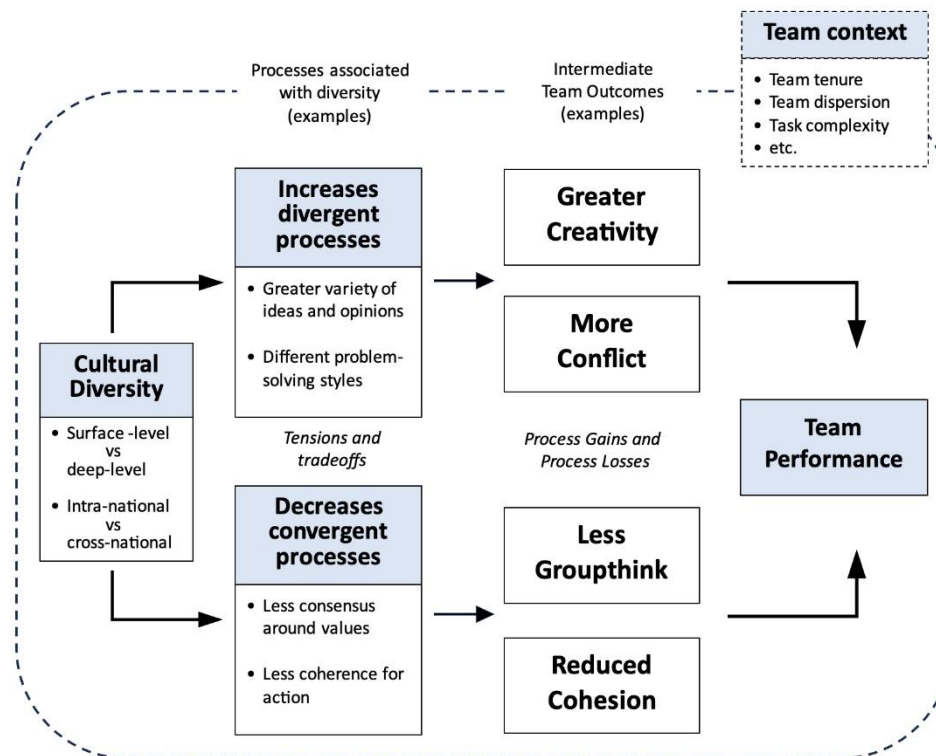
Scholars generally agree that cultural diversity in work groups is a double-edged sword, presenting both challenges and opportunities. While it can cause conflict and hinder effective functioning, it can also foster synergy and learning, depending on specific team processes and contextual variables. Cultural diversity impacts teams differently than other types of diversity, often operating subconsciously and potentially leading to misattributions (Stahl & Maznevski, 2021).

Zooming into two studies of scholarly work on cultural diversity and team-level processes by Stahl and Maznevski (2021) and Zellmer-Bruhn and Maloney (2020), I found that the primary distinction in their reviews lies in their focus and theoretical approaches.

Stahl and Maznevski (2021) propose a theoretical framework that identifies specific team processes as mediators and moderators influencing team performance. They emphasize that cultural diversity impacts team dynamics through divergence (creative conflict and innovation) and barriers to convergence (miscommunication and conflict). Their review underscores the importance of process-oriented and management-focused research, revealing

that cultural diversity indirectly affects team performance through mediators such as creativity, cohesion, and conflict, and moderators like team tenure, task complexity, and team location.

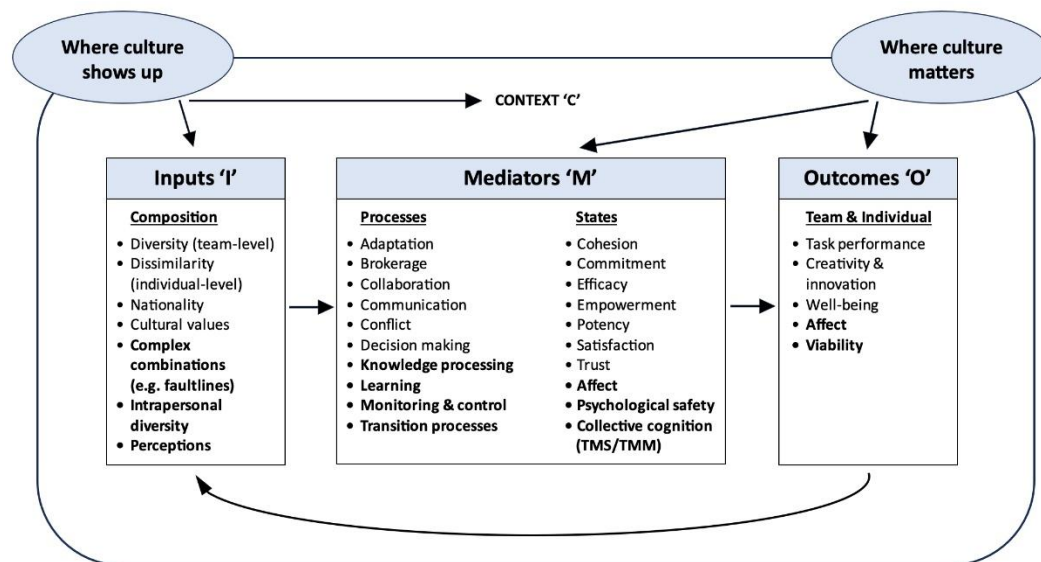
FIGURE 4 Theoretical Framework Guiding the Meta-Analysis by Stahl and Maznevski (2021)



In contrast, Zellmer-Bruhn and Maloney (2020) employ the IMOI (Inputs, Mediating mechanisms, Outcomes) framework, with the addition of the Context category. Their focus is on how culture intersects with team dynamics and outcomes; particularly how internal and external contexts moderate the effects of cultural diversity. They highlight that cultural diversity impacts team processes, such as communication and decision-making, and emergent states like trust and psychological safety. They also critique the static conceptualization of culture in existing research and advocate for examining the dynamic and situational aspects of culture.

In the Zellmer-Bruhn and Maloney (2020) IMOI+C framework depicted below, the constructs in bold are studied less often in MCT research than constructs in regular font.

FIGURE 5 The IMOI+C framework by Zellmer-Bruhn and Maloney (2020)



Both reviews agree on the significance of mediating mechanisms through which cultural diversity affects team outcomes. Stahl and Maznevski identify key mediators such as creativity, cohesion, and conflict, whereas Zellmer-Bruhn and Maloney focus on processes like information sharing, decision-making, and conflict management. They both note that cultural diversity's impact varies depending on contextual factors, but Zellmer-Bruhn and Maloney place a stronger emphasis on the role of internal and external contexts, including team size, tenure, and broader cultural environments.

Stahl and Maznevski call for more process-oriented research and comprehensive meta-analyses to understand the indirect impact of cultural diversity on team performance. They note that surface-level diversity often leads to categorization and stereotyping, while deep-level diversity, such as cognition and values, plays a significant role in team dynamics.

Zellmer-Bruhn and Maloney suggest that research should move beyond static conceptualizations of culture and explore how cultural diversity emerges and evolves in

different contexts. They focus on the dynamic and situational aspects of cultural diversity and the role of contextual factors. Future research should aim to integrate these perspectives, exploring both the dynamic nature of culture and the specific processes that mediate the impact of cultural diversity on team performance.

Highlighting more specifically the aspect of collaboration, Janssens and Brett (2006) propose a fusion model of collaboration during face-to-face meetings of global teams. These consist of members who have very different cultural and functional backgrounds and who differ in their assumptions about how to approach relationships and how to make decisions (Maznevski & DiStefano, 2000). The fusion model emphasizes cultural intelligence by respecting and combining different cultural perspectives, rather than relying on dominant coalitions or integration models. It differs from the integration model where team members seek consensus via subordination of individual differences to team interests. In the fusion model, team members engage in dialogue to seek compatibility with cultural precepts and focus on multiple criteria. Where the integration model generates superordinate team precepts, the fusion model results in a coexistence of different precepts. The idea behind is that the quality of the decisions is closely related to how team members' unique perspectives are utilized, integrating the best knowledge available across the organization.

The model focuses on two main tasks: information extraction and decision making, leveraging the diverse viewpoints of team members. It addresses challenges like unequal power relations and cultural precepts that can lead to process losses, proposing structural interventions to counterbalance these issues. In the fusion model of collaboration, team members have to recognize and respect each other's cultural differences while preserving their distinct cultural identities.

Interestingly, Janssen and Brett (2006) argue that the complexities of managing global teams cannot be effectively addressed by merely applying group decision-making insights derived

from North American research. Examples of such models are outlined by Canney Davison (1996) and include (1) polite standoff, where team members conceal their differences, (2) subgroup dominance, where one faction dominates the team's work, (3) exclusion, where certain members are either intentionally or unintentionally left out of the team's activities and (4) synergy where the team fully utilizes all its members' skills.

In a qualitative field study of five multicultural teams, Earley and Mosakowski (2000) identified a hybrid model of teamwork, which led to effective outcomes. This hybrid model emerged as team members developed, shared, and enacted a simplified set of norms through mutual interactions. In this approach, team members set aside their own cultural practices in favor of universal practices adopted by the entire team.

Other Aspects of Multicultural Team Dynamics

To understand how diverse groups can effectively collaborate and achieve organizational goals, it is important to gain an understanding of several aspects of multicultural team dynamics. This section explores various dimensions of multicultural teams, including their structure, culture, psychological safety, and the process of cultural negotiations.

Multicultural Self-Managed teams

Research shows that self-managing teams offer several advantages to organizations, including greater flexibility, enhanced quality of work life, reduced absenteeism and employee turnover, increased job satisfaction, and heightened organizational commitment (Ten Vregelaar, 2017). Their less hierarchical team structure allows them to address complex and urgent problems more effectively. Cheng et al. (2012) suggest that while multicultural self-managing teams face more challenges compared to monocultural teams, such as communication barriers and interpersonal conflicts, these challenges can be mitigated through specific combinations of cultural values within the team.

Team Culture

Referring to team culture as the shared beliefs and norms that guide team members' behavior, Shin et al. (2016) distinguish between two primary types of team cultures: (1) supportive team culture, characterized by mutual support, trust, and encouragement among team members and (2) achievement-oriented team culture that focuses on goal attainment, high performance, and competitive excellence. They also incorporate the concept of collective regulatory focus, distinguishing between: (1) promotion focus which emphasizes aspirations, growth, and accomplishments, and (2) prevention focus which prioritizes safety, responsibilities, and avoidance of losses. The findings suggest that managers should consider the type of team culture they cultivate, depending on whether their goal is to enhance task performance or foster creativity. For tasks requiring high creativity, fostering a supportive team culture and encouraging a promotion focus might be more beneficial. Conversely, for tasks requiring strict adherence to goals and high performance, an achievement-oriented culture with a prevention focus might be more effective.

Psychological Safety

It is important to note the critical role of psychological safety in effective team functioning, learning, and performance, as emphasized by Edmondson and Bransby (2023). A safe and supportive team climate can foster cultural intelligence. Psychological safety, defined as a perception related to the consequences of taking interpersonal risks, particularly at work (Edmondson, 1999), refers to a shared belief that the team environment is safe for interpersonal risk-taking. Edmondson and Lei (2014) highlight that psychological safety facilitates open communication, encourages experimentation, and supports learning from mistakes, essential elements for high-performing teams.

Edmondson and Bransby (2023) state that psychological safety is shaped by various factors, including organizational culture, leadership behavior, and team dynamics. It is a complex and

dynamic phenomenon that can fluctuate based on contextual and situational variables, making it essential for leaders to continuously nurture and monitor this construct within their teams. Examples of obstacles to achieving psychological safety are hierarchical structures, cultural differences, and competitive environments.

Psychological safety is often influenced by cultural contexts, leading to potential biases. Studies have indicated variations in how psychological safety is perceived and manifested across different cultures (Prosviriakova & Khapova, 2024). Power distance, collectivism/individualism, and uncertainty avoidance significantly affect psychological safety. High power distance cultures associate psychological safety negatively due to hierarchical structures. High uncertainty avoidance cultures require more effort to create a psychologically safe environment, considering broader sources of safety signals.

Understanding the cultural backgrounds of team members can help in designing interventions that are culturally appropriate. For example, in cultures where direct communication is not the norm, leaders might need to find alternative ways to encourage open dialogue.

Cultural Negotiations

Finally, the issues that arise when individuals from different cultures work together can be explored from the perspective of negotiated culture. Brannen and Salk (2000) identified specific organizational events and issue domains that act as catalysts for cultural negotiations. These events prompt discussions and adjustments, leading to shared understandings and practices. They see organizational culture as continuously shaped through interactions and negotiations between individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Deep contextual knowledge of specific cultural environments is considered of paramount importance in their ethnographic fieldwork. Although their unit of analysis is the organization, the findings can shed light on similar processes at the team level. I intend to verify if this approach can shed new light on how cultural intelligence can arise in multicultural teams.

Development of Cultural Intelligence

Both conceptualizations of CQ, as proposed by Earley and Ang (2003) and Thomas et al., (2008), share the conviction that cultural intelligence can be developed with cross cultural contact or training. There is extensive evidence that exposure to different cultures through international assignments, travel, and work experiences significantly contributes to the development of CQ (Crowne, 2008; Harrison, 2012; Li et al., 2013; Moon et al., 2013; Kurpis & Hunter, 2017; Pekerti & Arli, 2017; Schwarzenhal et al., 2017).

Fang et al. (2018) examined literature dealing with the development of cultural intelligence. Various training programs have been designed to enhance cultural intelligence. These programs often include cross-cultural simulations, workshops, and experiential learning activities. Formal educational interventions, including courses on intercultural communication and global leadership also seem to play a positive role in developing CQ. Individual traits such as openness to experience, curiosity, and adaptability are important predictors of CQ development.

Unlike traditional CQ training, which is cognitive or knowledge-based and may not fully prepare individuals for real-world cultural interactions, experiential learning enables learners to develop practical skills to cope with the new cultural environment. MacNab (2012) explores how experiential learning approaches can effectively enhance cultural intelligence. They emphasize hands-on experiences and direct cultural engagement, enabling learners to internalize cultural knowledge deeply and develop adaptable skills in specific situations. Their research highlights the role of individual traits such as general self-efficacy, as defined by Bandura's social learning theory (1977), in their ability to succeed in specific situations in CQ development. The study also examines the contextual influences on CQ development, particularly through contact theory (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998). This theory suggests that meaningful interactions with people from different cultures can enhance cultural

understanding and skills. Finally, the authors suggest that CQ training programs should be extended over a period of weeks rather than days to allow for the internalization of cultural knowledge and skills. They advocate for combining travel abroad opportunities with structured CQ education and training.

Likewise, Azevedo and Shane (2019) introduce a new training program that combines traditional lecture-based methods with experiential approaches. It targets all four facets of CQ (cognitive, metacognitive, motivational, and behavioral) in order to strike a balance between “knowing, doing, and reflecting.” Mindfulness is seen as a critical component for translating cultural knowledge into effective cross-cultural skills. Additionally, the program includes experiential activities both inside and outside the classroom, reinforcing the “doing” aspect. In this study I will propose a serious game as an alternative method to developing cultural intelligence which can provide opportunities for experiential learning, and skills development in an interactive format.

Cultural Intelligence in Multicultural Teams

To conclude this review on cultural intelligence and teams, I focus specifically on the research of CQ at team level. CQ conceptualized as an individual-level construct presents several challenges when applied to higher levels of analysis. At the team level, researchers have either combined individual scores to represent team cultural intelligence or analyzed how a team leader's cultural intelligence affects team performance. However, there is limited understanding of how this individual attribute integrates and interacts with team or organizational constructs. This involves a complex multilevel process where cultural intelligence must transition across different levels to impact collective actions and outcomes (Liao & Thomas, 2020).

To start with, in this study I adopt Liao and Thomas's (2020) definition of a culturally intelligent team or organization. According to their view, such a team consists of individuals

whose interactions within the group and behaviors toward the external environment generate collective outcomes. This definition highlights the context-dependent nature of cultural intelligence, particularly at the team level. Merely aggregating individual scores or relying on a leader's CQS score fails to capture these internal and external dynamics and processes. Liao and Thomas (2020) conclude that to fully understand how teams or organizations develop cultural intelligence, further research is needed on the composition and processes involved.

Moynihan, Peterson, & Earley (2006) studied the relation between team members' CQ and the performance of a multicultural team. They suggest that culturally intelligent teams improve performance by fostering collective optimism, efficacy, and team identification. Earley and Gardner (2005) identified the essential team dynamics critical for the development of team CQ in multicultural teams in communication, trust, conflict resolution, leadership and cohesion. They posit that high CQ teams monitor interactions effectively and build strong team identities, enhancing overall performance. Cultural intelligence aids in developing shared understanding of team processes, role expectations, and communication methods, which helps reduce conflicts and misunderstandings in multicultural teams (Ang, Van Dyne, & Koh, 2006; Ang et al., 2007; Earley & Ang, 2003).

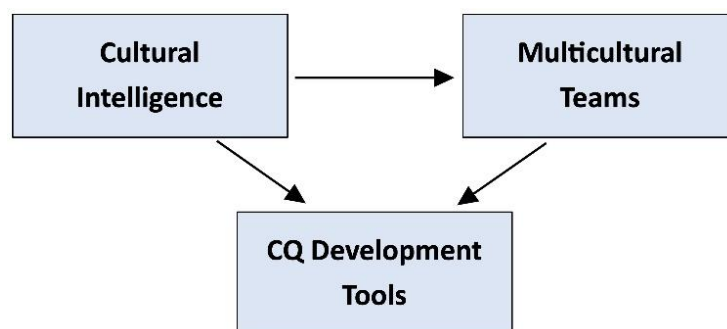
In a recent article, Bückner and Korzilius (2024) propose the first instrument designed to measure CQ at the team level, the Team Cultural Intelligence (TCQ) scale. They define team cultural intelligence as the ability to share and critically reflect on extracted information to enable effective team decision-making while respecting team members' unique backgrounds, values, and languages. They posit that the members' interdependence creates interactions that result in shared values and mutually shaped behaviors.

Their TCQ scale reflects these team members interactions, information processing and responsive behavior in five dimensions: cultural metacognition; meaningful participation; co-existence; openness to value, visibility, and information diversity; and openness to language

diversity. Co-existence and meaningful participation can be seen as two interrelated, possibly synergistic processes that can promote divergent thinking and creativity (Crotty & Brett, 2012). The idea of co-existence emphasizes respecting team members' diverse approaches to teamwork and varied perspectives on tasks whereas meaningful participation involves team members engaging in dialogue when they have unique information to contribute (Janssens & Brett, 1997). Research indicates that such participation increases the likelihood of incorporating minority opinions and unshared information, which are beneficial for creativity. It implies that not all team members need to participate constantly, but rather when they have distinct perspectives to share.

Meeting the calls for exploring CQ at group level and the need for longitudinal studies to gain insights into how CQ evolves over time (Ott & Michailova, 2018, Zellmer-Bruhn & Maloney, 2020), my study revolves around four different cohorts of multicultural teams in the timeframe of five months each. To conclude this chapter on literature review I am proposing the following conceptual framework:

FIGURE 6 Conceptual Framework for the Study of CQ in Multicultural Teams



Conclusion

In this literature review, I endeavored to provide a broad understanding of the current state of research on cultural intelligence (CQ) and its application in multicultural teams. By examining the two primary models of CQ, their dimensions, and the critical evaluations of these models, I identified several areas that remain underexplored, presenting opportunities for further investigation. Firstly, there is a pressing call for methodological diversity. Existing research on CQ has predominantly employed quantitative methods, leading to a narrow understanding of the construct. My research will address this gap by incorporating qualitative methodologies to gain deeper insights into the nuanced processes through which CQ develops and operates within multicultural teams.

Secondly, the need for multilevel analysis is evident. Current studies largely focus on CQ at the individual level, overlooking how it functions within teams. My research will center on team-level CQ, exploring the complexity of how CQ transitions across different levels to impact collective actions and outcomes. This multilevel perspective will shed light on the interactions within the group and behaviors toward the external environment that contribute to these outcomes.

Moreover, research based on the four-factor model of cultural intelligence often treats culture as a static construct, whereas it should be examined as a dynamic and evolving phenomenon. Understanding how cultural diversity emerges and evolves in different contexts is crucial for comprehending its impact on team processes and outcomes. My study will adopt a dynamic view of culture, examining the fluid nature of cultural interactions within multicultural teams.

Finally, the current literature on the development of effective training and development programs to enhance CQ allows for further expansion. While there is evidence that exposure to different cultures and cross-cultural training can enhance CQ, traditional CQ training programs may not fully prepare individuals for real-world cultural interactions. More

effective training approaches or interventions need to be developed and validated. My research aims to design an effective training intervention to foster cultural intelligence in teams, allowing them to successfully manage their interactions and performance in culturally diverse settings.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In this chapter I provide an exposition of the methodology that I employed in the research and offer a comprehensive description of the research setting. I include a rationale for the methodological decisions that I made, and discuss the data collection methods, data processing procedures, and data analysis techniques that I utilized. In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the processes that lead to the emergence of collective cultural intelligence in a multicultural team, I used a case study strategy resulting in a sequential four-phase approach. These included (1) data collection, (2) data analysis, (3) designing and implementing a method for fostering collective cultural intelligence in multicultural teams, and (4) validating the method.

A case-study design allows for an in-depth exploration of a phenomenon in a particular corporate or socio-historical context. It is a versatile design that lends itself to diverse methodologies aimed at identifying what is happening in a specific situation and why (Creswell, 2018). In this research I adopted an interpretive approach following the philosophy that sees humans as creating meanings. Therefore, human beings and their social worlds cannot be studied in the same way as physical phenomena, e.g. natural sciences research. Interpretivist researchers try to take account of this complexity by looking into different perspectives. This stance allows me to acknowledge the situated, dynamic and relational nature of culture and to link micro actions and practices to broader contexts (Piekkari et al., 2020).

This approach also provides the flexibility needed to explore issues that evolve over time, allowing leads to guide research into new areas or towards the development of emerging theoretical constructs (Cassell & Symon, 2004). That can account for the initial theoretical framework to change according to the emerging findings. To capture multi-layered, contextual dynamics, I engaged in extensive fieldwork over a period of two years. I used a variety of data collection techniques and analytical procedures. Data sources varied from extensive engagement with the sample community, observations, individual and group semi-structured interviews, qualitative questionnaires, informal conversations, to reflections and research diary, field notes and memos, short videos and photographic documents.

The combination of interviews, focus groups, qualitative questionnaires, and written reflections, with extensive observational data provided a plurality of lenses through which the emergence of collective cultural intelligence could be interpreted. While interviews and written responses offered insight into participants' individual sense-making and reflections, observations, field notes, and informal conversations revealed the unspoken, relational, and situational aspects of team interaction, those which often remain hidden from retrospective self-reporting.

This blending of subjective and intersubjective perspectives provided me with insights on how meaning, behavior, and relational norms evolved over time, thereby treating cultural intelligence not as a static trait but as a relational capacity in motion, a form of becoming, consistent with my interpretivist philosophical position. The methodological integration also strengthened the credibility of the findings through data triangulation and allowed emerging patterns to be interpreted within their full social, cultural, and pedagogical context.

TABLE 1. Data Sources

Data source	Amount	Content	Time periods
Engagement with the community	17 weeks x 5 hours x 4 cohorts = 340 hours	Weekly work with participants: coaching (team and individual), workshops	February-June 2022 Sept-Dec 2022 Feb-June 2023 Sept-Dec 2023
Observations	15 x 1 x 4 = 60 hours	Actively observing group interactions	February-June 2022 Sept-Dec 2022 Feb-June 2023 Sept-Dec 2023
Text documents	66 documents, approximately 300 pages	Transcripts, summaries questionnaires, WhatsApp communication, field notes, memos, Team agreements	February-June 2022 Sept-Dec 2022 Feb-June 2023 Sept-Dec 2023
Individual and team questionnaires	87 individual questionnaires 17 team questionnaires	qualitative questionnaires on intercultural expectations, and intercultural challenges in the group	Begin each semester Half-way through semester
Group and individual interviews	22 interviews, 42 interviewees, average length 40 minutes = 880 minutes (15 hours)	17 group interviews with 2 or 3 team members, 5 individual interviews	February-June 2022 Sept-Dec 2022 Feb-June 2023 Sept-Dec 2023
Photographic documents	72 photos and 25 short videos	Various team activities including documentation of the intervention and the evaluation	February-June 2022 Sept-Dec 2023 Intervention December 2023
Total size population	87 subjects	Mainly International Business undergraduates	4 cohorts from February 2022 to December 2023
Informal conversations over coffee or otherwise	Approx. 10 hours	With participants, colleagues, including those who worked with team intercultural agreements	Throughout the 2 years

Study Population and Research Setting

The population under scrutiny consisted of international undergraduate business students during their exchange semester abroad. These students formed new, self-managed multicultural teams who collaborated on a complex task and delivered a solution to a challenging problem faced by an enterprise.

The sampling was purposive and entailed four cohorts of about 20 to 24 students per semester, grouped in four to five teams, spanning over two years and adding to 17 teams. I interviewed 44 students out of an 87-student population.

The participants engaged in an international minor program titled Business Leadership Sustainability, an elective course available to final-year bachelor students at my university. As anticipated, these international students encountered various cultural challenges while adapting to their new social and academic environment.

The participants, generally aged between 20 and 24, were primarily business students, with occasional representation from technical or arts disciplines. They participated through the Erasmus exchange program, which provided a grant, often awarded based on their academic performance. However, it is plausible that the grant provided did not fully cover living expenses. Consequently, additional financial resources were necessary to sustain themselves in the Netherlands, where the cost of living is high. Some students took jobs to cover for the expenses; others may have come from wealthier families. This may suggest that many students likely originated from affluent backgrounds, irrespective of their country of origin.

Furthermore, most of the participants were from European countries, with a minority of Dutch students and a smaller contingent came from non-European countries such as Mexico, South Korea, Mozambique, Yemen or South Africa. These students brought with them a diverse

array of life experiences, perspectives, motivations, levels of engagement, cultural awareness, and educational backgrounds (Appendix 1).

Case Study Context

The participants were immersed in the Dutch society and its culture, particularly in its educational system. The national Dutch culture is characterized by individualism, low power distance, low-context communication, directness, and task-orientation (Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede et al., 2010). Within the university setting, values such as effective time management, student autonomy, accountability, and freedom of expression are deeply embedded and actively encouraged during the program. Many students found themselves outside their comfort zones, navigating uncertainty as they adapted to their new lives. This led to varying degrees of stress or anxiety, influenced by cultural differences and individual personalities.

Specific Pedagogical Approach

Within the minor program participants engaged in both individual and group assignments, with the latter comprising multidisciplinary and complex projects with no specific guidelines. These projects were affiliated with businesses, research centers, municipalities, or local social initiatives, all grappling with sustainability challenges. On an individual level, students designed their own social enterprises based on multi-value creation business models.

Aside from focusing on business and sustainability, considerable emphasis was placed on personal leadership. Students were encouraged to reflect on their personal issues, enhance self-awareness, and foster better mutual understanding. One tool utilized for this purpose was the Lumina Spark, a psychometric assessment test designed to provide insights into individuals' personality traits, preferences, and behaviors (Lumina Learning, n.d.).

Significant effort was dedicated to addressing intercultural issues through the completion of questionnaires regarding participants' intercultural experiences and a questionnaire about the challenges encountered while working in multicultural teams. Additionally, a workshop on cultural awareness was organized to further delve into these issues.

Apart from a timeline for expected deliverables, three designated days for on-campus activities and occasional lectures, the minor program intentionally maintained a loose structure (Appendix 2). Scheduled classes, prescribed textbooks, and traditional examination methods were intentionally omitted to foster individually tailored learning, self-reliance, and accountability. Students were afforded significant freedom and empowerment, encouraged to take ownership of their learning journey. Four dedicated coaches provided guidance and support within this learning community.

Coaching sessions were tailored to address participants' individual needs and encourage self-reflection. The emphasis was on fostering a safe environment and an open learning community. Participants were encouraged to speak up and challenge both coaches and fellow participants. Interaction within teams and between different teams in the same class was considered important. This pedagogical approach draws inspiration from the High-Impact Learning that Lasts (HILL) method, advocated by educational scientists Dochy and Segers (2018). It encompasses seven key features of a conducive learning environment, including urgency, learner agency, action and knowledge sharing, collaboration and coaching, hybrid learning, flexibility, and assessment as learning (Arikan et al., 2022).

The entire minor experience was marked by a mix of enjoyment and challenges, with participants assessing their progress against shared milestones such as presenting project plans and receiving feedback from peers and coaches. Mid-term evaluations and final evaluations represented the most important milestones where all participants were involved.

During the research, I made a considerable effort to establish an informal and safe environment for the students. However, an unavoidable teacher-student dynamic remained part of the internal environment. This power dynamic is inherent in the teacher's position within instructional interactions and had the potential to influence data collection during both structured and unstructured interviews. Participants may have tailored their responses based on what they believed the coach/teacher wanted to hear. Some participants might have downplayed the lack of participation by certain team members, while others may have refrained from disclosing disagreements or negative team dynamics to avoid influencing the teacher's final judgment. To mitigate this limitation, I utilized multiple data sources, including observations from other coaches, feedback, and informal conversations.

Desirability bias also played a role in the evaluation of the tripartite intervention, particularly in interviews. For example, some respondents provided contradictory answers, initially stating that they adhered to the agreement, only to later admit they had forgotten about it.

The following table details the phases, methods and timing of my methodological approach.

TABLE 2. Overview Four-Phase Approach

	Phases	Methods	Timing
1	Four Rounds of Data Collection	Questionnaire Intercultural Expectations	1st week minor
		Group Dynamics Questionnaire	Half-way through semester
		Semi-structured Interviews	Last week
		Observations	Throughout semester
		Examples internal communication	Last week
2	Data Analysis	Reflective Thematic Analysis, Atlas.ti	After last rounds of interviews
		Coding: descriptive and interpretive	
		Code groups (sub-themes)	
		Generating themes	
3	Development and Implementation of the Method	Team Game	Third and Fourth cohort
		Discussing dilemmas	Fourth Cohort Before half-term
		Team's Intercultural Agreement	
4	Validation of the Method	Instructional method "Glad, Sad, Mad"	Fourth cohort end semester
		Interviews	

Phase One: Data Collection

The initial three rounds of data collection focused on what constitutes an effective multicultural team, the challenges these teams face and the processes that contribute to the development of team cultural intelligence. The fourth round additionally included the validation of the tripartite intervention that I will elaborate on later in this chapter. Overall, I engaged in a variety of research activities including participant observations.

At the beginning of the program the participants' intercultural expectations were assessed through a questionnaire. The outcome of the questionnaire was shared in class. The goal was to get an insight into their intercultural experience and create more cultural awareness. At the same time, it offered an opportunity for a first reflection on cultural differences (Appendix 3).

Half-way through the program a group questionnaire was administered. The open questions were about the intercultural challenges, the way they reconciled the cultural differences, how

work was organized, the role of motivation of team members, dealing with disagreements and what works well and what not (Appendix 4).

These qualitative questionnaires were administered to all 87 students and had a high response rate of about 95%. I aimed at capturing the lived experiences of the participants rather than procuring frequencies or descriptive statistics (Fink, 2003, as cited in Hennekam & Shymko, 2020). The goal was to obtain a diversity of accounts on the topics of interest within the given population.

Finally, at the end of the program, I conducted semi-structured group interviews with two or three respondents per team, complemented by a few individual interviews (Appendix 5). I invited each team, which typically consisted of 4 to 6 members, to delegate a few interviewees. It resulted in 22 interviews, each lasting an average of 40 minutes, amounting to a total of 15 hours.

An additional benefit of group interviews was the possibility to experience the group dynamics while discussing and evaluating points raised by the group. I was also able to establish the level of consensus the group had regarding these specific issues. The individual interviews, on the other hand, provided the depth and the details that can be achieved when establishing a one-to-one relationship with an interviewee.

Accounting for the power and role of language in the wider context of the study, I phrased the questions in a way that the respondents could relate to and would use themselves. Instead of inquiring about work norms or task allocation, I would phrase the question as, "How did you get organized, how did you divide the work, or what role did you have in the team?"

Ethical Considerations

From the start of the international minor, participants were informed about the research activities and their purpose. I made clear that involvement in interviews was on a voluntary

basis, that there are no right or wrong answers nor any kind of repercussions following their engagement in interviews. I also explained that their anonymity would be ensured and that I would take any other measures that might be necessary to keep them protected. Being unaware of the requirements for ethical clearance at the beginning, I worked based on oral consent and the fact that participation was on a voluntary basis. Eventually, and during the final phase of intervention and validation, I obtained written consent from the entire cohort of participants. Additionally, I tried to adopt an ethical and inclusive posture in a broader sense by attempting to represent the voices and stories of participants in an inclusive and culturally sensitive manner. I took care not to inadvertently patronize or negatively impact respondents who expressed themselves critically, adhering to best practices in relating to and representing participants.

Interview Topics

The topics evolved and thus varied slightly per cohort depending on the new insights and the dynamics of the group at that time but all included discussions on differences in work norms and behaving, roles and task allocations, decision-making, the role of English as common language, ways of communicating, perspectives of time and time management, what facilitates social cohesiveness, incidents and anecdotes and the team's best and worst moments (Appendix 5).

Each round of data collection informed the next and allowed me to adjust, remove, or add topics based on the insights gained or the type of issues that arose with that particular cohort. For example, it became clear that collecting examples of internal communication within teams such as emails, WhatsApp group messages, examples of messages via Trello or Notion, which are communication applications used by some teams, mainly witnessed the friendly tone and the level of informality of communication. Clearly, disagreements were not shared on such occasions with the researcher, so I ceased to collect this type of data. Nonetheless, these

examples of internal communication revealed the extensive use of collaboration platforms and teamwork apps, with teams utilizing Trello and Notion often proving to be efficient and successful. During the first round of interviews, a local student suggested the use of a team agreement, commonly referred to as a team charter, a document that outlines team norms and expectations. This proposal indicated potential challenges with that team. Further probing with that team resulted in a more informal, individual interview that revealed internal conflicts among the task-oriented and relation-oriented team members. I probed the idea of the team charter in the following rounds of interviews.

Phase Two: Data Analysis

I performed the data analysis in Atlas.ti 23 and 24 where documents containing transcripts, field notes, questionnaires, etc. were stored. I applied the reflective thematic analysis developed by Braun & Clarke in 2006 and expanded in 2022. It consists of six phases which are not necessarily linear (1) data familiarization (2) data coding, (3) initial theme generation, (4) theme development and review, (5) theme refining, defining, and naming, and (6) writing up. This method considers the researcher's subjectivity as a primary tool to conduct analysis, rather than seeing it as problematic or biased. The analysis happens at the intersection of the dataset, the context and the researcher's insight and experience (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Reflexivity is considered on three levels. At the personal level, it examines how personal values influence the research process. At the functional level, it explores how research methods and design elements shape the study. Finally, at the disciplinary level, it addresses how academic disciplines influence the creation of knowledge.

In this study, I positioned myself both as an insider, being a member of the BLS learning community, and as an outsider, studying the interactions between participants. On the one hand that allowed me to build trust and create a safe environment, but on the other it entailed some risks. The participants might withhold information about difficulties or conflicts because

of how they perceived my role. They might also fear that speaking up freely about difficulties could affect grades or other team members.

I kept a logbook and reflective journal to make sense of the research, documenting and storing facts and information while using it to question my own assumptions. These assumptions are shaped by my personal, cultural, and professional background. I was born in Rijeka into the Italian ethnic minority in Croatia. My father was of Italian descent, while my mother a Croat. The city of Rijeka, with its history of being contested by Italy, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and Yugoslavia, has a rich cultural diversity. This multicultural environment sparked my interest in foreign languages, literatures, and cultures, leading me to study the English Language and Literature in Trieste, Italy. I also spent a year in England to experience the culture firsthand before settling in the Netherlands. Additionally, my professional career in several multinational companies allowed me to observe cultural differences in action at the headquarters of these corporations.

I examined my own expectations and biases, particularly those related to participants who are the same age as my children, as well as any tendencies to stereotype relationship-oriented participants versus task-oriented ones. After studying the first two cohorts, I was aware that a routine might develop in the research process, potentially causing me to overlook new information. Additionally, I recognized the risk of misrepresenting or misinterpreting participants' accounts based on my own beliefs and experiences. However, I acknowledge that assumptions inevitably influence research and that ongoing reflection can enhance the quality and depth of the research findings.

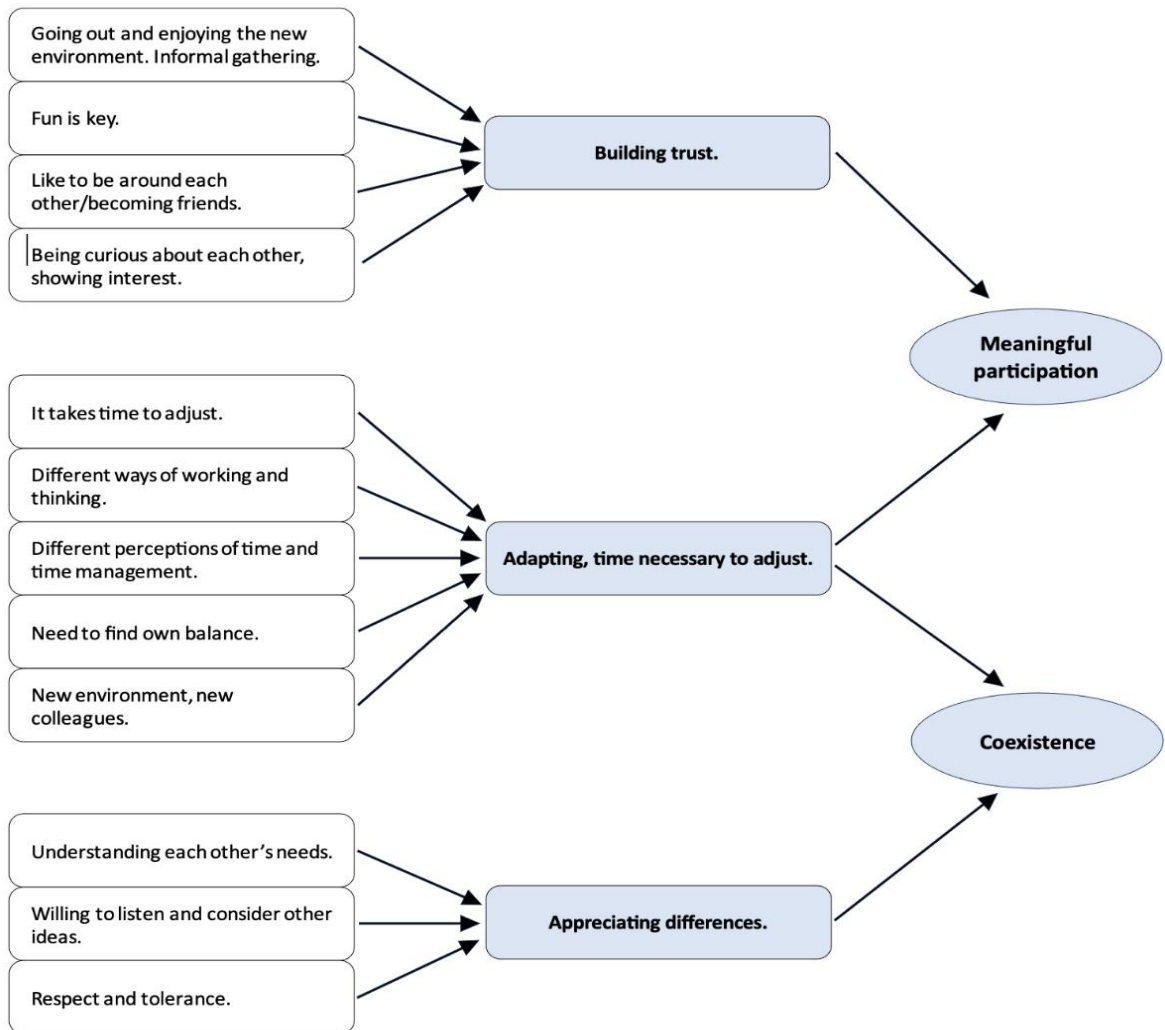
After extensive familiarization with the data by reading, rereading, and making notes, I started with the first round of coding. I labeled every meaningful unit or utterance that was potentially relevant for the research question in either a descriptive, semantic way or an

interpretive, latent way. The latter was used in order to identify meanings that go beyond the semantic surface of the data. As Braun and Clarke (2006) put it, “some codes mirror participants’ language, other invoke the researcher’s conceptual and theoretical frameworks.” This led to 857 codes and 1355 quotations.

As the coding process progressed and the analytic insight developed, I modified some existing codes to incorporate new material or new insights. Consequently, I organized these in 50 code groups “summarizing” the range of different responses or meanings around a particular issue or topic. Next, I generated initial themes by clustering together potentially connected group codes. A theme, as defined by Braun and Clarke (2022), is a pattern of shared meaning organized around a central concept that captures multiple facets of an idea.

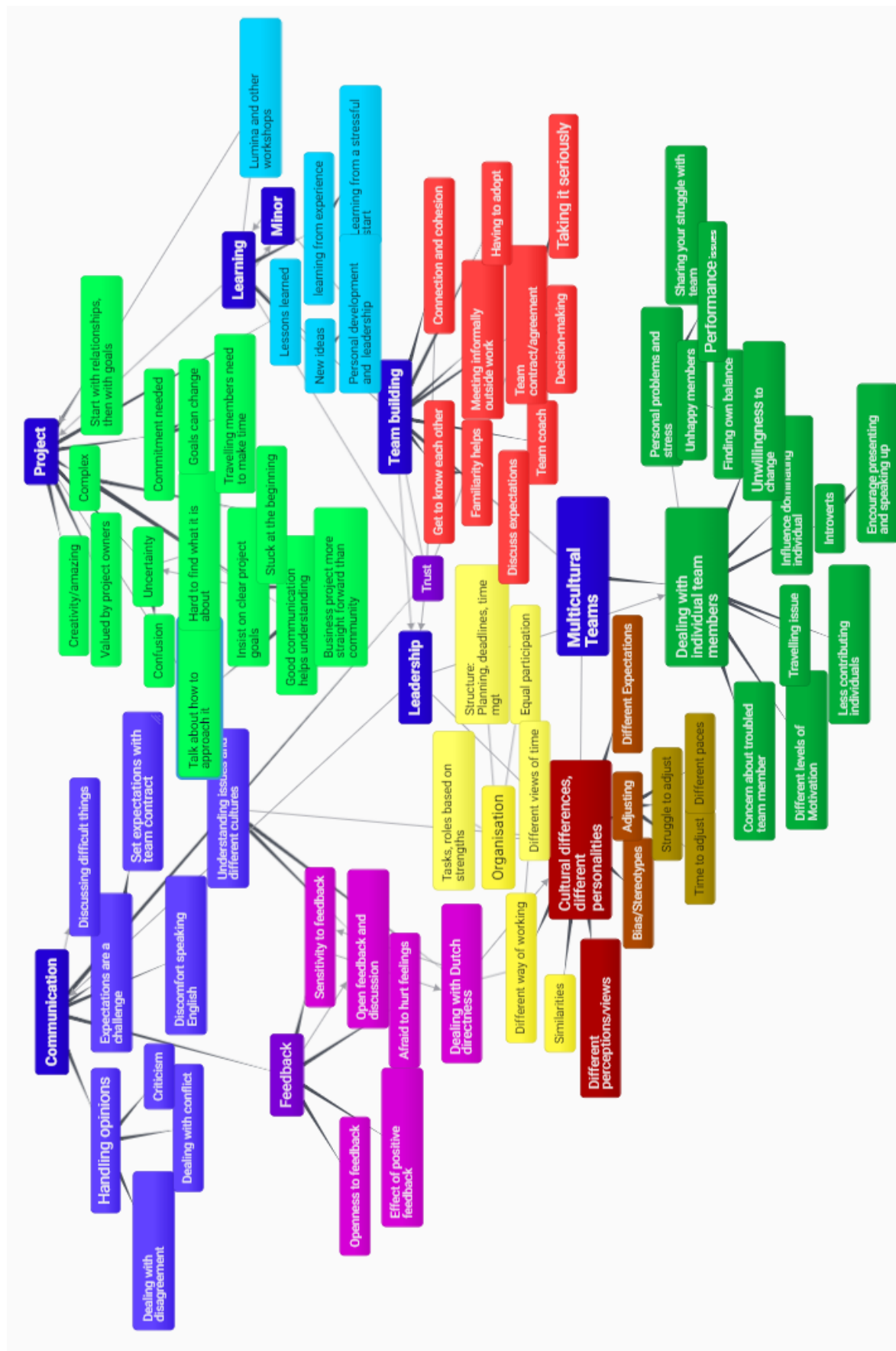
Figure 7 shows an example of the coding process.

FIGURE 7 Example of Coding, of Creation of Groups and Themes



I visualized the outcome of this process in a thematic map, which provided an overview of all the themes and subthemes, completing the story about the data. That allowed me to identify interconnections between the recurrent features in the data. Additionally, I explored patterns or clusters that weren't immediately obvious but could ultimately offer the most useful and important analytic insights. Finally, I identified the most salient themes in relation to the research question. Focusing on these themes provided me with more insight into what contributes to effective teamwork and took my research into the next phase.

FIGURE 8 Thematic Map



Phase Three: Developing and Implementing the Tripartite Intervention Method to Enhance Cultural Intelligence in Multicultural Teams

While the initial phases of the research design provided a well-grounded understanding of the participants' experiences and perspectives, the subsequent data analysis and interpretation led to the development of a course of action. I implemented this method with the fourth cohort of the international minor, which consisted of 20 students and ran from September to December 2023. The implementation occurred in the seventh week of the minor. At that time, students had just begun focusing on team assignments, having previously been occupied with completing their first individual assignments and presentations. A total of 17 participants, along with their four coaches (one per team) and an additional facilitator, took part in the intervention. Unfortunately, three participants did not take part in this intervention due to private reasons.

I conceived a tripartite action plan based on the two key success factors for collaborative teamwork that emerged as most relevant:

1. Cultivating Strong Interpersonal Relationships: this involves getting to know one another and understanding each other's cultural habits.
2. Establishing an Effective Team Organization: this entails creating a suitable organizational structure for the team.

For the first category, I decided to engage students in a serious game followed by a discussion of interculturally-related dilemmas, and for the second, to have them draft a Team Intercultural Agreement. A serious game refers to a game specifically designed for purposes beyond pure entertainment with the primary goal to educate, train or solve real-world problems (Ávila-Pesántez et al., 2017).

The serious game was chosen over the traditional team building workshops as a more dynamic and possibly effective alternative. It can provide opportunities for experiential

learning, engagement, feedback, and skill development in a fun and interactive format. The game was based on *Het Team Spel*, translated as "The Team Game" developed by Vincent van Reusel and Natasja Loomans. It is designed to facilitate team building, collaboration, and communication within organizations.

In order to fit the activity in a timeframe of about two hours, I selected several tasks and activities centered around three goals: (1) Getting to know each other (2) Gain insight in strengths and weaknesses (3) Discover why things are not progressing as they should. Four rounds of about 20 minutes were played focusing on the subjects: mission and goals; tasks and roles; procedures and work agreements and interpersonal relationships. Each group was facilitated by a team coach (Appendix 6).

After the two-hour lasting game followed by a break, I encouraged teams to discuss some challenges and issues faced by previous cohorts of the BLS minor. These were presented as cases extracted from the data, including examples of work-related dilemmas, incidents, and situations encountered by multicultural teams (Appendix 7).

Discussing these issues may help teams gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and dynamics associated with multicultural teamwork as well as give more insights into potential cultural differences, communication barriers, and conflict resolution strategies.

An additional effect might be the prevention of potential conflicts and misunderstandings in the future. By addressing past issues proactively, teams may identify possible sources of conflict and develop strategies for managing them, thus promoting a more harmonious and cohesive team environment.

Furthermore, open discussion of these dilemmas in a multicultural setting with a variety of perspectives could enhance cultural sensitivity and awareness within the team. By reflecting on past experiences, team members might develop a greater appreciation for cultural

differences and similarities, enabling them to navigate cultural diversity more effectively in their interactions and decision-making processes.

And finally, these discussions would inform the development of a team charter referred to in this study as the Team Intercultural Agreement. Insights gained from reflecting on past dilemmas and issues could be used to identify relevant values, norms, and guidelines that should be included in the Team Intercultural Agreement to promote cultural inclusivity, fairness, and respect.

I encouraged participants to apply any format they found suitable and yet provided them with a template with examples of the items that could be included for support. Eventually, all teams chose to use that template (Appendix 8).

The concept of team agreement, also known as a team charter, originated from project management and organizational development practices. It is grounded in principles of collaborative goal setting, team empowerment, and accountability, and draws from insights from psychological safety and organizational learning, particularly Amy Edmonson's definition of psychological safety as "a shared belief held by members of a team that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking" (Edmonson, 1999).

In this study, I adapt and extend this concept to develop the Team Intercultural Agreement: a written agreement among teammates that explicitly defines social norms, expectations, and working practices in culturally diverse teams. The Team Intercultural Agreement emphasizes shared goals, role clarity and mutual responsibility while addressing common challenges in multicultural collaboration such as miscommunication and differing assumptions. It is designed not only to support explicit communication, but also to foster accountability, psychological safety, and a shared sense of ownership.

Phase Four: Validation of the Tripartite Intervention Method

While the tripartite intervention took place in the first half of the fourth cohort of the minor, I tested its validity in the last week using two different methods to evaluate it and reflect on it. One method enabled participants to assess their feelings and the other to express their thoughts more explicitly.

The first was the instructional method “Glad, Sad, Mad,” borrowed from the action research scholar and practitioner Van Der Zouwen (2018). It encourages participants to engage in reflective dialogue, share their perspectives, and identify both positive and negative aspects of the situation. It provides a structured format for capturing diverse viewpoints and emotions, which can inform subsequent discussions, decision-making processes, and actions.

The method involves the use of a flipchart divided into three sections: "Glad," "Sad," and "Mad." Participants identify aspects of the current situation that make them feel glad, things that evoke sadness or concern, and issues that provoke anger or frustration. They write down their thoughts or feelings on sticky notes and place them in the corresponding sections of the flipchart (Appendix 9).

This method allowed all participants of the minor to express their feelings about working in multicultural teams. The question posed was *“If you look at your project team now, considering the Team Intercultural Agreement and the way you’ve been working ever since, what are your feelings?”*

Having worked individually first, participants then grouped together the post-it notes based on common themes, labeled them accordingly, identified what stands out and drew conclusions about their common experience.

The second validation method was conducting group interviews with two members per team per interview. Participants were questioned about how they experienced the team game, the discussion of the work dilemmas, and the creation of the Team Intercultural Agreement.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has provided a detailed account of the methodology employed in this research. By adopting a case study strategy and an interpretive approach, I was able to delve into the processes that led to the emergence of collective cultural intelligence in multicultural teams. The diverse data sources provided a nuanced understanding of the subject matter. The method of data analysis used was thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke. It resulted in a sequential four-phase approach comprising (1) data collection, (2) data analysis, (3) designing and implementing a training intervention for facilitating the emergence of collective cultural intelligence, and (4) validating the training intervention method. The training intervention involved a team game, followed by a discussion of culturally related dilemmas and the drafting of a Team Intercultural Agreement. The validation of the training intervention was performed using the instructional method “Glad Sad Mad” enabling me to tap into participants’ feelings and it was complemented by group interviews. This methodology facilitated the capture of the multi-layered, contextual dynamics of cultural intelligence development and evolved through extensive fieldwork over two years.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Introduction

In this chapter I present the findings of my research on how to foster collective cultural intelligence in a multicultural team. It is structured around the sub-questions that explore the challenges faced during the formation of the teams and the strategies used to address them, as well as the processes that enhance the development of collective cultural intelligence within these teams. Additionally, I elaborate on the insights gained into the complex nature of multicultural teamwork in this specific research setting. In particular, I discuss the roles of the local members and the often-overlooked impact of incorporating fun and leisure activities into the teamwork process. Finally, I examine the participants' responses to the intervention designed to facilitate the acquisition of cultural intelligence.

Before diving into the key findings from the main qualitative investigation, I briefly summarize the results from the preliminary questionnaires administered at the beginning of the program for each cohort. The goal was to understand the respondents' previous intercultural experience and their expectations regarding working with other cultures. The outcome shows that participants expressed optimism about collaborating in multicultural teams, viewing it as an opportunity to learn from diverse cultural perspectives and enrich their own understanding. They anticipated that a diverse background would foster a broader spectrum of ideas, solutions, and creativity. Many expressed a keenness to comprehend and respect other cultures, along with a desire to cultivate open-mindedness. When discussing anticipated challenges, participants mentioned potential issues like misunderstandings, language barriers, differing working styles, communication norms, and conflicts. To tackle

these challenges, they emphasized the importance of open dialogue, active listening, mutual respect, clear communication, goal setting, task allocation based on competencies, and maintaining a positive attitude.

Most respondents shared past intercultural experiences, ranging from overseas trips to friendships with individuals from diverse backgrounds. In their words, these encounters have been enlightening and enriching, enabling them to appreciate various cultures, cuisines, and perspectives. In terms of language proficiency, many participants rated their English skills at B2 or C1 levels, although some expressed a desire to enhance their English communication skills. The following section will present the key results of the qualitative investigation based on interviews.

Addressing the Challenges of Navigating Cultural Differences

The narratives presented by the participants revealed that navigating cultural differences is a complex and at times stressful process, often requiring significant adjustments in behavior, communication styles, and time management practices. The following sections outline the most notable challenges from the interviews, beginning with general commentaries on what it was like to work in a multicultural team, along with diverse perceived educational backgrounds.

I think it was a bit stressful for me, just like because everything was like in a box. I would say like, I do appreciate the learning, of course, but yeah, sometimes I would like just to to reach it for me, yeah.
(Respondent 21)

Because of the different educational backgrounds, we were not on the same track. And that's not only with theory, but that's also with the way of communication, the way of working. (Respondent 39)

Balancing Authenticity with Adapting to Other Cultures

A participant commented on the challenge of maintaining one's cultural identity while adapting to the norms and expectations of team members from diverse backgrounds. Finding a middle ground where one can remain true to one's own cultural values while also being

open to adjusting other behaviors facilitates collaboration. This balancing act is necessary as complete behavioral change is impractical and undesirable.

A balance of sticking to your own culture and like staying yourself, but at the same time adapting to the other group members and adapting to their cultures. And there you somehow have to find like a balance or middle ground to work on. ... Because of course, you cannot change your behavior completely. That does not work. But on the other hand, I think you have to adapt somehow because otherwise it will be a big mess because the other person would not understand you or it will not work or whatever.

(Respondent 10)

Adapting to Collaborative Work with Different Cultures

Adapting to collaborative work with different cultures emerged as a significant learning curve for many participants. Structured and spontaneous work styles often clashed, highlighting the need for flexibility and patience. One participant, accustomed to a highly organized approach, found the less structured, more spontaneous work environment challenging but recognized it as a valuable learning experience. Similarly, adjusting to local cultural norms, such as time management practices, was described as difficult yet essential for effective integration into the team.

I struggle working in a way like this because I'm not a flexible or spontaneous person, especially in business life. I prefer to have everything structured, everything organized and say, ok, we're our meeting, talk about ABC and then we do it this way and we start at 9 and yeah. So for me, it's hard to to work like this. But of course it's it's a learning process. (Respondent 10)

Working like in a group project... was challenging and helpful at the same time. And yeah, I think ... that collaborate and trying to be more collaborating, understanding each other like the different perspective is something so important, important and can actually help you and even yourself development. (Respondent 13)

For me it's been challenging. I've been trying to adapt towards the Dutch time more because I'm living in the Netherlands, but I've been struggling with it. Honestly, it's been like a hard habit that's been going on for around 21 years to sort of change. (Respondent 9)

Managing Diverse Approaches to Time Management in Multicultural Teams

Time management practices varied significantly among team members, often leading to misunderstandings. Cultural differences in the perception and management of time required

careful negotiation and adaptation. For instance, some participants expected advance notifications for meetings and schedule changes, while others were more flexible.

Recognizing these differences and finding a way to accommodate them is essential for preventing friction and ensuring that everyone feels respected and understood.

But I think it was not only about being punctual in the morning ... We also had some... time differences and or feeling of time... We also had some discussions in our group about having other meetings.

Because for example, I as a German, if I have another meeting which has nothing to do with our group work in the afternoon next week, I will tell you three weeks before, and let you know the day before and tell you more often. I'm sorry I have to leave at three, whatever... And I think that was also cultural differences and some group members in our group, they didn't tell us in the 1st place. I was like, hey, you are now leaving, why couldn't you tell us earlier? ... But I think that was also like, their feeling of time was just different and they just didn't recognize or like maybe they never felt this way. That, hey, I have to tell you in advance that I have a meeting. (Respondent 10)

But I think like, as long as we don't overdo it or don't be too late... it's ok to be 10-15 minutes late, maybe in the morning. But if you're absent for an hour or something, that is like some question should be asked like, why were you late? Because I think everyone in the team would need to know this as well. Like, if you're an hour late, you should say. (Respondent 9)

Somehow you have to understand that's not like a personal thing. They don't want to like I'm late because I don't want to work with you. That's not their mentality, it's more like the culture. And I think that's a process to understand this and to learn to work with it. (Respondent 10)

Discussing Sensitive Issues Related to Work Quality or Lack of Engagement

Addressing sensitive issues related to work quality or lack of engagement was crucial to multicultural teamwork. In many instances, team members refrained from discussing these matters, fearing the potential escalation of conflict until deadlines require action. Some teams only began to address issues such as insufficient participation, communication, or engagement towards the end of the project, driven by the urgency to complete assignments. Eventually, this approach often proved effective, and participants recognized the importance of open communication, empathy, and willingness to listen to each other's concerns. The urgency of the situation triggers team learning. By creating a safe space for dialogue, teams can address

issues proactively and maintain a positive working atmosphere. This approach not only improves work quality but also enhances personal development and team cohesion.

We started talking (note researcher: two dissatisfied team members), then we talked also with C. and then at the end also with T. (note researcher: the member that was disengaged), so with the entire group. Just taking a coffee and discussing like first of all, about how we were feeling, the group and maybe also asking like maybe we are doing something bad for you. Why? Why are you feeling like this? Why are you acting like this? And then just trying to listen the like the answer, the replies that you give to us? (Respondent 13)

... if he was feeling comfortable with us and if we were doing like a good job trying to involve him because of course standard, we are triggers ... I don't think he feels ... part of the group. I don't think so. But the same time, I also think that we tried our best. (Respondent 14).

And also because like before the the mid-evaluation, we didn't talk and we didn't discuss all together. So like the atmosphere in the group wasn't that good. We weren't talking like, for example, if someone was sending messages in the group... no one was replying or I was replying or just maybe me and C. So like, I felt that we weren't really involved in the project and in the group. (Respondent 13)

Handling Negative or Direct Feedback

Handling negative or direct feedback was also challenging, particularly when cultural sensitivities were involved. Participants had to learn to deliver feedback in ways that are constructive yet considerate of cultural differences. Adapting the manner of communication to the recipient's cultural background helps reducing misunderstandings and ensuring that feedback is received positively.

I didn't know, for example feedback, that it was different in every country, in the way of communicating... I like the feedback, because then I know what she really wants per point that we wrote about... But yeah, I didn't know that it was seen by others so differently, so I was happy and others, Oh my God, they are really thinking it's really bad. (Respondent 37)

So, if you have, for example, to criticize their work, they're felt like criticize personally ..., but it was just about the business thing. And I think that was sometimes hard also for me to find a way how I can communicate these things in a way they don't feel offended because I don't want to offend them. But at the same time, I of course want to improve our project. (Respondent 10)

I really, really told him my thoughts like kind of brutal, but still nice. I tried to be very nice too. Umm, so they accepted, they agreed sometimes, sometimes they didn't. So sometimes you have to agree to disagree. That's also fine. (Respondent 12)

Addressing Disagreements

Addressing disagreements and team issues openly and constructively was another critical factor. Different perspectives lead to disagreements which some teams and team members see as opportunities for negotiation and growth. Participants found that discussing disagreements, even if it meant agreeing to disagree, was crucial for maintaining team cohesion and motivation. The willingness to adjust and show motivation is particularly valued, as it fosters a collaborative spirit and mutual respect.

I would say it's perspectives, different perspectives leading to some disagreements or agreements or conflicts. Not exactly sure which is the right word to use... and from there we learn how to negotiate... (Respondent 9)

We had discussions ... Sometimes we found we agreed on one thing, on two things and sometimes we agreed to disagree and just continued. It takes you back quite good, I think. And, for me as well, I know I'm not perfect. I know I have to also adjust and I'm open for it as long as I see motivation, right. This is always an important thing for me it seems. (Respondent 12)

That also I think I've learned that working in team is also more efficient in terms of ideas and resolving problems like having difficult conversations really helps a lot. Also like arguing about what's right, what's not right, what should we do, what we should not do it together, it really I think gets you to a good conclusion. You just think about yourself. Yeah, maybe you're right. Maybe you're not. But thinking with others and discussing can really be helpful. So I think that's what I've learned. (Respondent 13)

Performing Under Stress in Multicultural Teams

Finally, the ability to perform under stress varied among team members, influenced by cultural backgrounds and individual personalities. Stressful situations revealed different coping mechanisms, with some individuals becoming more direct and task focused.

Understanding and leveraging these differences effectively is crucial for maintaining group motivation and achieving project goals.

People act differently when they are under stress and I definitely noticed a few individuals in our group that dealt a bit better... compared to others. Some of the individuals became a bit more direct and, not only speaking for the Dutch because all of the people got a feeling we need to get things done and from there on, you like have ... different characters when performing on the stress and you actually notice that in our group dynamic. (Respondent 20)

When that got cancelled (note reseracher: the initial project) and all of our work was for nothing,... we felt less motivated, but it quickly came back and we also had some informal activities like we went for lunch. We went to interact together to increase the group dynamic, the positivity and the group...So I think that I think that kept up the motivation and people were actually doing stuff for each other.
(Respondent 22)

All teams encountered these challenges to varying extents. However, those that implemented the strategies discussed in the following section were able to overcome these obstacles and develop into effective teams.

Processes Leading to Thriving and Effective Teams

The research into the processes leading to effective teams reveals that successful multicultural teams share several key characteristics and strategies, as outlined below.

Cultural Curiosity and Social Interaction

A consistent theme across the interviews was the importance of cultural curiosity. Team members who actively showed interest in each other's backgrounds and customs created a more inclusive and empathetic environment. For example, informal questions about personal traditions or shared meals outside of work helped bridge cultural gaps and build personal connections. This curiosity extended to regular social interactions, such as meeting for drinks or attending events together, which facilitated a better understanding of each other's contexts and working styles. Such interactions help overcome initial discomfort and foster a sense of camaraderie and trust.

Being curious about each other was very important, and even if it's just like, ohh and what do you eat when you're sick in Germany or whatever? Like just normal things that help you relate to the other person and to make you feel like you can be like them, you know? (Respondent 2)

I think it was not that much of an active process, it was more... like us getting to know each other, I don't know a drink together and like getting a bit personal. So in that process you also got to know, ok, what is maybe different about that person due to their culture...and afterwards because you knew that you could deal with it in a better way. (Respondent 5)

Overcoming Initial Challenges

Building an effective team was not instantaneous; it required time to adjust and understand each member's perspectives and working styles. Initially, team members faced challenges due to cultural differences and varying expectations. However, through regular social interactions and open communication, they were able to address these challenges. For instance, discussing and acknowledging cultural differences upfront makes it easier to navigate potential conflicts and misunderstandings.

I think maybe it is also really important to to recognize the cultural differences in the first place, because if you know that there are... some differences that are caused or that are due to the different cultures, it's easier to deal with them because you can kind of expect them. (Respondent 5)

Nowadays we get along pretty good between us and it's weird because thinking about how we were in the beginning. I think we really managed to like know each other, understand each other. So it's teamwork ... at first me and I. probably were were more like "these two are always joking. Maybe they don't want to work." Maybe this and that, but in the end we realized that they do what they have to do, even more. And at the same time ... we managed to have a nice time together and make things like easy between us, talk without problems. So it was really nice how it turned out at the end. (Respondent 17)

We also are still adapting and if we were to work longer together, I think we would be much more understanding of how to do the task most successfully... (Respondent 2)

Most teams experienced a phase characterized by awkwardness and cautious friendliness, which persisted for a few weeks. This tentative period lasted until the point when project deadlines approached and required concrete action. The first major milestones often introduced tensions and challenges within the teams. In some instances, these early crises served as a catalyst for better organization and coordination. Teams that successfully navigated these challenges emerged stronger.

... in the middle phase is when it started getting a lot harder, because that's when the project pretty much like crystallized in our heads. We knew what we were doing, what we had to do, and that's when a little bit of the communication, of the language barrier came in. (Respondent 41)

...maybe in the first half we thought, ok, everything will come in the upcoming weeks. But there was a certain point maybe after the midterms, or later on, that we all thought or realized, ok, there is a lot of

work to do and we need to interview people, we need to work on our individual assignment...a certain point, everything comes together and I think that we didn't completely realize that as a group, but in the end we were able to handle it and we created a better work environment in the last 4-5 weeks. And that's not only because the, let's say the formal part, the formal communication, the formal project work. But that's also about how we were able to work as a real team and also that we became friends. (Respondent 39)

Crises frequently triggered a turnaround, often preceded by difficult conversations. When handled effectively, these discussions lead to increased engagement and commitment from all members. One participant specifically recalled the challenging mid-project period when the team struggled to motivate and integrate a reluctant and disengaged member. In this case, frequent and awkward conversations eventually led to a successful turnaround.

...we kept on trying. I think the main thing we did was open communication. We would sit her down and say "Yes, M., we agree this is not how we usually do things, but let's try and uh yeah. Just let's try and do it this way and let's try and do it that way and we don't have these answers for you"...She really wanted specific steps which we couldn't give her because we are not the teacher and the teacher did tell us to do whatever we wanted. So in the yeah, the middle phase, it was a lot of convincing, a lot of talking, a lot of frustration, because sometimes I think from her part also the frustration got the best of her. (Respondent 41)

So the conversation could get a little bit not hostile, but not the best I would say. But in the end, I think, all the communicating got through her at some point, cause there was just a moment where it like, clicked and her brain and ours. And since then we were friends again. We could do it again. It was easier, the communication wasn't painful, wasn't awkward. It was normal to say, ok, let's do this. Let's do that without feeling like she's gonna feel attacked or something.

So it was a process, a lot of communicating and a lot of explaining which took effort from all of us pretty much. (Respondent 41)

Communication and Trust Building

Open and consistent communication is a cornerstone of successful teamwork. Informal meetings and regular interactions not only build trust but also create a safe space for team members to express their thoughts and concerns freely. Teams that prioritized clear communication and actively sought feedback from each other were better equipped to handle tasks efficiently. This process of building trust is gradual but critical, as it leads to a more comfortable and cohesive team dynamic.

I think what formed our team now is that we got to know each other, got to trust each other, that we know how we would react to others opinions. Umm, so I think it was more or less about gaining trust in the group. (Respondent 18)

I think like at the beginning, everyone had its way to work, to like face this project and we weren't talking with each other. So everyone was like expecting the other people to do what they wanted. But of course it wasn't going to happen. And then I remember one day we just like sitting on the table and we're like, OK, let's talk. (Respondent 19)

Let's say what we think, and what we don't like about how things are working. Well, If I'm more comfortable with, and we just like talk, and we're like, OK, so we understood each other and after that I think everything worked out well. (Respondent 17)

Sometimes I. was maybe not saying what she wanted, I don't know. Maybe she wasn't feeling comfortable in saying what she was thinking. So I was like, don't worry, you just say it, because if you don't say it, it it doesn't work between us. So just say it and then we talk about this and that's what we did. And so this is why it worked out at the end. (Respondent 17)

Balancing Work and Leisure

Several respondents emphasized the importance of humor and informal conversations during work breaks. This helps release tension, strengthens bonds, and keeps the team engaged and motivated. For example, integrating casual discussions about non-work-related topics, such as personal interests or cultural trivia, can make the work environment more enjoyable and less stressful. Laughter, fun, and shared experiences outside the workplace contributed significantly to this positive environment. These elements made it easier for team members to understand each other's personalities and work styles, reducing friction and enhancing collaboration.

We just became more open to each other like the whole thing of managing this team group was the communication... for example M. and I. were constantly going out of the working track, coming with some topics like hey guys, what is your Zodiac sign or what's your main traditional dish in your country? And I think that this kind of helped us because we were not that much focused on the work and we were making sure that there is room for friendship talks and not only work think. I think that we found kind of the balance...If you were thinking only about the work and only and you're thinking about these people only like fellow students and not with friends, there is no balance, you feel overwhelmed in some point... (Respondent 23)

Sometimes we were having breaks to have some laughs and stuff, but at the end of the day, like we were doing something, we were making progress, so yeah, it's OK to have a breaks, a few laughs, like few jokes. (Respondent 40)

...this really helps to address issues and we can also laugh about something. So since we know that, yeah, hopefully all of the group can take the jokes we make. We can also be direct on our project like, If we feel like "what the hell are we doing?" or what is going on, then we just say directly. And then you already feel that the others feel the same and that is a great way to cope with the issues and problems we have. (Respondent 32)

A Flexible Approach to Leadership and Collaboration

Most teams confirmed that one or two leaders emerged spontaneously in the early stages of their formation. However, as teamwork progressed and the situation required, different team members stepped up based on their expertise and the task at hand. This flexible approach to leadership allows for a more dynamic and responsive team structure, where members can leverage each other's strengths effectively. Collaborative processes, such as dividing tasks according to individual strengths and providing immediate feedback, ensure that the team remains efficient and focused on collective goals.

I think it was depending on the situation, someone would emerge a little bit as leader at that moment like say something, or to in that part of a task specifically like he would say something or would state something that other people would follow. But it was everyone did that at a certain moment and then different times. So I think we were all leaders in some way. (Respondent 6)

So he started talking about the biochemistry industry and that's my area. So that's where I felt I was like explaining more, and all the team was asking me some questions. Ok. so can you explain this or can you explain that? That's where I felt like I was a model leader just in that part. But because I know more about the topic. (Respondent 6)

I was leading when we had to schedule meetings and when we had to be altogether. There I really had to say, yeah, we have to do that or we have to do that. When do you have time? So I was really coordinating also. (Respondent 16)

In one meeting, L. takes the lead...A., because of her behavior, is not like a lead, but sometimes she also said, ok guys, we'll have to do this or we have to...So I think everyone in one part of the process is the lead. (Respondent 15)

I think they're all impacted in a positive way. I think so, like organization for example: I. is more structured, more organized than we are. So she always try to put more structure on it, I guess well, like M. would give something for self. I don't know, everyone should support someone something, but I

don't think it was like I think the input was always positive or constructive to say how things could be better or how we could improve. But it wasn't never like bad. (Respondent 6)

Structured Planning and Flexibility

Successful teams also emphasized the importance of achieving a balance between structured planning and flexibility. While the initial stages might have been chaotic, establishing clear timelines and responsibilities helped streamline the workflow. Teams that collaboratively planned their tasks and provided regular feedback on each other's work tended to be more organized and efficient.

We didn't plan that much like into the future and then someone in the group started doing something just individually and then it may be wasn't fair for everyone. ... if you just say two hours or one hour before" Let's work today on the project" it might be hard for some because they might have totally different agenda. (Respondent19)

When we set those intermediate deadlines, we all knew, ok, now it's gonna step by step, it's gonna become clear, and we know what to do. And we will come to good end result. (Respondent 18)

Each week one of us or two of us as a team did something, and then the others needed to give feedback, you know, because we already, like, did most of the stuff together. So we already knew what it was and it was like in line with everyone. (Respondent 5)

Inclusivity and Respect

Inclusivity and mutual respect were fundamental to the success of multicultural teams. Teams that respected and valued diverse perspectives and made conscious efforts to include all members in discussions and decision-making processes created a more supportive and dynamic environment. For instance, addressing any issues directly and respectfully ensured that all voices were heard and that the team can find common ground.

...everybody of us is really different and A., with his spirit of doing things last minute is also a value added to our team because sometimes you just cannot have everything planned out and organized. So at the same time I would say that J. and I also, uh, we are very structured and we like to have things organized and planned. And I just think that this this ways of behaving compensate one another and, we're efficient and successful in the end, or J. with her critical spirit of evaluating things in a critical manner and B. that is a bit of a little bit more shy. (Respondent 3)

We also had meetings in the beginning where we took like 10 to 15 minutes for everyone to speak up for about what was on their mind, and if they had any struggles or they just want to talk about something. So it was a bit more informal. (Respondent 20)

I think we just went like half away to each direction. So like we started planning together the things, but we also had that shield-time... I would say maybe open communication...the more open we are to communication and new stuff, I think the better it has become for us to make progress. This is basically understanding each other through empathy and trying to understand the different cultures. (Respondent 19)

I think what makes us a really good group... the communication when we think something is not good or something is going on or we can do something in another way. We talk to each other and with respect also always with respect. (Respondent 15)

I think we all try to be really open minded and to accept all the cultures and all the yeah way of thinking. We all have. So yeah, we're really open minded and understand, try to understand every point of view and every person's perspective I think. (Respondent 16)

Achieving Collective Cultural Intelligence

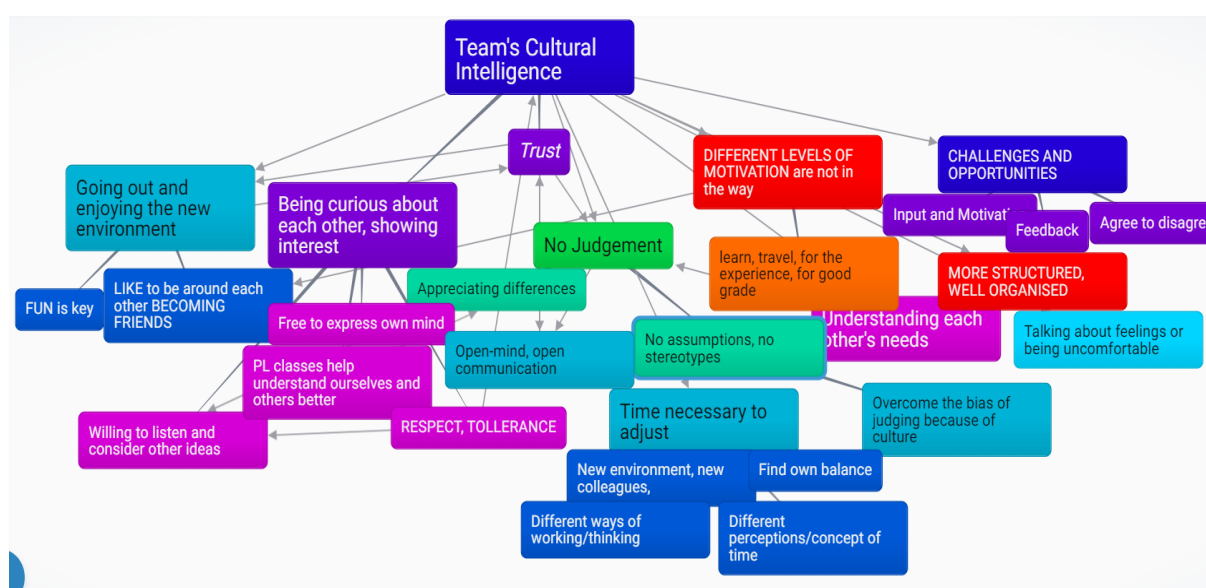
My understanding is that the processes described above facilitated the development of collective cultural intelligence within the multicultural team. It appears that it is the complex interplay of all these factors, rather than any single mechanism that leads to more effective teamwork. However, it is the establishment of positive informal and interpersonal relationships that seems to be of greatest importance, providing a solid basis for collaboration. Notably, some participants observed that cultural intelligence was a context-dependent phenomenon, requiring different skills and abilities depending on the specific cultural environment.

Yes, it's difficult to answer which situations where the turning point in being cultural intelligent. Yeah, it was the development: going out together, talking about things outside of university and talking about family and how a situation is etcetera. (Respondent 1)

And it also like ...enjoying ourselves and this new environment, because I think that if I were in Germany, I would have been culturally intelligent in a much different way. Umm because of like this is not our usual context. This is... different context with different people from different cultures. So yeah, I think that and that going out part was very key. (Respondent 2)

To conclude this section, I summarized the processes leading to collective cultural intelligence in a mind map using the themes and code groups generated through the thematic analysis.

FIGURE 9 Mind map team's collective cultural intelligence



In the following section, I present the findings about a specific phenomenon that I identified while researching the processes that lead to the creation of collective cultural intelligence. I call it the *local's myopia*.

The Local's Myopia

One of the intriguing observations I made is that the local members of the team encountered significant intercultural challenges within their project teams. Contrary to initial expectations, familiarity with the environment does not alleviate these challenges, it sometimes intensifies them.

Yeah, in the beginning I thought, ok, I have an advantage because I'm still in my own country. But during the first, let's say weeks, my view completely differentiate because S. also mentioned big

differences between the countries and for me to work together with them was difficult as well.
(Respondent 39)

For me, it was always, we used to do this and this, and that. It was routine work, and now it wasn't routine work, but we have different people with different ways of working and routines. So that's also, it's also hard for me. I didn't get why they didn't get why we are doing things. Did they didn't understand why I was saying that. (Respondent 37)

I think, as a Dutch person, maybe I expected a Dutch vision from everyone. So I think at the beginning I was struggling a bit too. ... I've done multiple projects already with other coaches as well in my in my normal studies, and then it was I think different ... Projects ...have layouts so everyone knows exactly what to do and then everyone does their part and then it's just finished. And then everyone is happy most of the times. (Respondent 29)

Local team members, accustomed to specific project methodologies and routines, found themselves grappling with diverse approaches and perspectives brought by international counterparts. This disparity often lead to misunderstandings and difficulties in collaboration.

In the beginning I was always working with define, measure, and everything (Researcher note: used to work with the DMAIC model) and now I just wanted to start with defining the problem, and sometimes people wanted to deep dive for something not relevant, but we couldn't, like, make that clear to each other, I think. ...People who study IB (international business) have the A. mindsets kind of way. And now the students are of course from other universities so they are familiar with other ways of working.....we were really stuck with how the Dutch people make projects. And I think for me, it was really enlightening to say the least to work with a lot of different cultures and doing this project you really came for... (Respondent 37)

... that's what initially all the groups do, that's all we've been doing through the whole business study, we divide work and everyone after like a week or a time we agree on, we're gonna show the work, and we go through together for like, you know, proof reading etcetera....But they were insisting on like working on this, uh report together in person and do it like, you know, for four hours, for example, in school instead, like of doing it individually at home... (Respondent 44, international student studying at the host univeristy)

The Dutch tendency to stay within their comfort zones emerged as a notable factor affecting team dynamics. Given their tendency to uncertainty avoidance they emphasised the importance of organising the team, planning activities and ensuring appropriate task allocation. Facing challenges in coordinating meetings with all members, some concluded that

using a team charter, a practice they had learned in previous courses might have been very helpful.

Let's say the overall way of working and to be more efficient it would have been good to maybe share something like planning or to create a planning within the group, or to and give a from the teachers, or from other people to give an overview of. OK. The first weeks we need to do this the second week this this, then and we are not only the ones within the group who need to think about the planning.
(Respondent 39)

What is good to have a, sounds a bit too serious, but maybe have a contract... in the beginning we put down when everyone is available on these days, what time...what we expect from everyone because with IB, you have a contract as well, as you can get handout strikes. Maybe that sounds a bit too serious, but in this manner if someone is not participating, I think there should be consequences.
(Respondent 29)

...if there are problems within a group, then the rules are not based on assumptions or on people's opinion, but then you have something to look back and that's then the paper or the contract. So it's always good to do it. And of course, maybe in 90% it's not necessary. (Respondent 39)

The reliance on home students within teams was a recurrent theme. Home students often found themselves burdened with more responsibilities and expectations compared to their international counterparts, who sometimes appeared less engaged due to personal travels or other priorities. This disparity in commitment and involvement occasionally strained team cohesion and project progress.

I had my thoughts about everyone doing nice trips abroad, of course, and I discussed with Lianne as well, because sometimes it felt like L. and I were really doing most of the project because they were there...they were not really like participating or really making decisions. Ohh yeah, I can take my laptop or maybe have a quick call on the phone...I have plans already so I can cancel...Sometimes we were at school till seven in the evening... working on the project. I don't think some the members really saw that, we put that much effort into it maybe it was also a bit too much effort sometimes. (Respondent 29)

I was still completely clueless about what we're doing. I was still struggling to grab what's, what is expected from us, so that's why I try to lean on you, you know Th. more, because since uh, he's a student from here, he could have understand more what you're expecting from us. So that's why I was trying to be a listener more to understand first, to look at it afterwards, but specific for the difficult difficulties in a group it's good to have it. (Respondent 40)

Despite these challenges, the findings also revealed instances of strong team dynamics and positive outcomes. Many teams with local students as members, after initial adjustments and discussions, successfully navigated cultural differences and developed effective working relationships. The experience proved enlightening for both local and international students, fostering mutual understanding and appreciation for diverse perspectives.

Despite that we had some problems at the beginning, but we didn't have... I worked with other project groups and I think this one was the nicest project group that I've worked with. The group dynamics was really nice actually, and everyone was open for feedback and everyone was of course, still participating, but sometimes a bit more than the other time and yeah. (Respondent 39)

I was so happy with my team and not only because of the results, but also because of how kind people are and how they can relate to you. And that is what a friend needs to have. So I can say that it was absolutely a good experience and these are not only friends for this semester, but always for the future as well. So that's another very important part for me. It's not only about the result about the impact, about the project, it's also about, the informal things, the social part of it. (Respondent 39)

And finally, in this last section I share the findings following the validation of the tripartite intervention.

Findings on the Tripartite Intervention Method

The approach involved three stages: beginning with a team game, followed by a discussion of scenarios derived from data that illustrated various issues and dilemmas encountered by previous teams, and concluding with the drafting of the team's intercultural agreement.

However, the game required more time and effort than anticipated, which ultimately diminished the focus on the second stage. As a result, the discussion of the scenarios received limited attention. Fortunately, some tasks within the game closely mirrored the issues presented in the scenarios. For example, the game included questions about how the team would handle late arrivals to meetings, members who fail to deliver work on time, or those who do not notify the team about expected delays. Another question addressed which team

procedure is the most challenging and how it could be resolved, along with potential solutions (Appendix 10).

It was fun because it was something different. It was not, we were not working on the project or in the middle assignment. So it was a nice opportunity to get to know each other and just have fun together. Uh, and I think in this situations people change their way of acting, the way of behaving. Some are becoming more extrovert, others are becoming more introverted, and it's nice to see this. And it was also the case in our group. (Respondent 35)

I believe that visualization and illustration of our situation always helps, and I think it was so helpful to better understand each other. Because it was like a middle of our project, and it was so helpful and we discussed or problems. I think they came up with the idea that, yeah, we need to separate our work and divide our tasks, and this based on our strength. ...Helpful to clear up problems which can be a starting point for a team agreement. (Respondent 36)

The game... gave us the chance to speak more freely and express our, let's say, maybe struggles or problems within the group. I remember I had a great conversation with L. that day because we discussed how for me personally, I need a clear communication and when somebody is maybe not answering the messages or yeah not expressing their own opinions and stuff. For me, it's very difficult to communicate and we talked, I said, yeah, I don't remember the specifics, but we were just saying how it's better to say more than less, to talk as much as you need to express if you need, if you don't understand something, if you need help with something, if you wanna help somebody like I think yeah, we agreed that we there should be better communication in the group. (Respondent 41)

During the research we referred to the Team Intercultural Agreement by using different terms: team contracts, team charters, team agreement. Ultimately, the creation of the Team Intercultural Agreement was postponed by a week and was drafted after a significant milestone in the minor—the mid-term evaluation. Some team members proposed that these agreements should be revisited at various stages of the project, while others admitted that they never referred to them again, particularly because no sanctions were established for breaches. The mid-term evaluations represent the first substantial assessment of the team's project, during which the team demonstrates and self-assesses the work completed thus far. This stage often leads to the emergence of tensions or frustrations within the group process and reveals organizational shortcomings. Interview data indicated that this was the point when the team's weaknesses became apparent, marking the first moments of stress when the team had to

perform. Therefore, the timing of drafting the intercultural agreement may have been optimal (Appendix 11).

We created the agreement, we set up some rules, mostly connected to time management and communicating, open and clear communication. We also wrote that we want to be regularly updated the whole group about each other's work. Yeah, being present for the presentation, for the meetings with our project owners, our personal meetings from the group...Uhm yeah, I think that's pretty much... about time management and communication because that's what we struggle with the most.
(Respondent 41)

We talked in front about trips. That's we are in the class when needed and that everyone reacted, and that they were saying/informed when they are not here, instead of the same day. So that's yeah, but for the rest, I don't know anymore. Ohh, and that's everyone talks. That's everyone says their opinion.
(Respondent 37)

...I think nothing would change. I think it was more a matter of motivation and engagement with the approach with the project instead of keeping the contract and all the rules as mentioned before. So yeah, I it was a matter of motivation. Instead of agreeing upon somethings and some tasks. (Respondent 38)

I do remember the exact time while we were writing. I don't remember the exact rules, but while we were writing those statements, we were already doing the those sentences that we right, so I can say that after writing it down, nothing has changed. (Respondent 40)

Both the Team Intercultural Agreement and the team game contributed to a certain extent to enhancing the team dynamics and addressing challenges within project groups. However, the team game was experienced as more useful.

The creation of intercultural agreements was possibly more effective for fostering clear communication and setting expectations than as a practical, functional document. Some participants emphasized the importance of drafting these agreements collectively to engage all team members, which was the original idea. Most agreements covered essential aspects such as time management, open communication, and protocols for dealing with absences and problems within the group. Regarding timing, some felt the agreements were introduced too late in the project timeline to be fully effective, while others suggested implementing them early and revisiting them periodically to adapt to evolving team dynamics. Although creating

these agreements helped clarify group expectations and provided a reference point for addressing issues, it did not always lead to noticeable changes in team behavior or motivation. Some members suggested that sanctions for not abiding by the rules should have been included. However, in critical moments, none of the team members referred to the agreements.

On the other hand, the team game was highlighted as a particularly effective tool for improving team cohesion and addressing interpersonal issues. It provided an opportunity for open dialogue, allowing team members to discuss problems and clear frustrations in a more relaxed and engaging setting. The team game facilitated a deeper understanding among team members, helping them articulate their needs and preferences more effectively. Its interactive nature encouraged participation and helped reveal different personality traits and dynamics within the group, which were beneficial for planning and executing project tasks as outlined in their Team Intercultural Agreement. And finally, participants noted that the enjoyable and interactive format of the team game could be helpful in other team settings beyond the university environment.

Summary of the Findings

Lastly, I present the summary of the findings and give an overview of the processes that lead to thriving and effective teams, and those identified in teams that struggle.

The findings revealed that adaptation to new cultural settings can be stressful and can demand considerable time and effort. Team members often struggled to balance maintaining their own cultural identities while adjusting to the norms and expectations of others. Collaborative work introduced further challenges, such as disagreements and team issues that require open communication and honest feedback. The degree of openness and directness in communication was culturally determined and presented dilemmas for team members when these differences became apparent. Individuals coped with this stress in varied ways,

sometimes exacerbating tension by reverting to typical cultural behaviors. Conversely, teams that integrated work and leisure, incorporating elements of fun and humor into their interactions, were able to alleviate stress and enhance their creativity.

Exploring the themes of (1) dealing with cultural differences, (2) intercultural communication, and (3) work organization allowed me to distinguish between teams that thrive and those that face significant challenges. Two associated sub-themes, (a) building strong personal relationships and (b) understanding diverse cultural practices proved to be pivotal for positive group outcomes.

Processes Leading to Thriving and Effective Teams

- Informal social interaction driven by cultural curiosity: members engage in activities outside the work environment, nurturing strong interpersonal relationships and affection. These subsequently foster inclusivity and respect.
- Trust is established, with members demonstrating accountability and a shared desire for success.
- Free flow of information: communication is effective, and members freely express their opinions.
- The team is well-organized, with roles assigned based on individual strengths or interests.
- Shared leadership and collaboration sustain the work organization.
- Balancing work and relaxation (joking and fun) during work sessions makes collaboration enjoyable.
- Structured planning is complemented by flexibility allowing some space for members that need it.

Processes in Teams Facing Challenges

- Variations in motivation, involvement, or interest in the project result in uneven work quality.
- Organizational difficulties arise, such as unclear roles, poor scheduling, and limited availability of team members.
- Communication issues persist, including assumptions, misunderstandings, and reluctance to address challenges directly.
- Some team members remain disengaged, with priorities outside the project.
- Cultural divides exist between task-oriented and relationship-oriented members, with differing perceptions of time and contrasting approaches, such as business versus creative thinking. Dutch extroverts often dominate, expecting their methods to prevail, but these are not always effective.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

This chapter offers an examination of the key research findings in relation to the central concepts in the literature review. It further elaborates on the contributions to theory and practice. I focus on the role of cultural metacognition, the importance of contextual factors in developing collective CQ, and the processes that drive this development. In addition, I highlight aspects that have emerged as particularly relevant in multicultural teamwork such as the concept of relational levity, which encompasses balancing work and leisure, humor and shared enjoyment, as key factors in team cohesion, along with the novel concept of *local's myopia*, which offers fresh insights into the intercultural adaptation of host-culture members. The chapter concludes with an examination of study's limitations and recommendations for future research.

The Critical Role of Cultural Metacognition

Upon reviewing the findings, I realized that cultural metacognition stands out as arguably the most critical element in developing cultural intelligence. This realization emerged as I delved deeper into data which consistently revealed the importance of being aware of and regulating one's own cultural assumptions. Participants reflected on their need to stay true to their cultural views while adapting to new circumstances. Their exposure to novel ways of working revealed the importance of acknowledging differences and learning to engage appropriately with them.

Balancing cultural authenticity with adaptation presented a significant challenge, particularly for the team members who experience a greater cultural distance from the host country.

However, cultural intelligence is not about assimilating into a new culture but involves being aware of cultural codes and responding to them appropriately, while retaining one's identity where necessary. This conscious negotiation between adaptation and authenticity is a hallmark of CQ in action and aligns with Thomas et al.'s (2008) process-oriented approach. It emphasizes the regulatory role of cultural metacognition in shaping cultural interactions.

Participants frequently engaged in self-reflection reassessing their behaviors in response to team discussions about time management, task delegation, and feedback styles. Many described how direct feedback, though natural in some cultures, could be perceived as blunt or impersonal in other cultures. This heightened self-awareness supports Van Dyne et al.'s (2015) argument that cultural metacognition is essential for critical thinking about cultural assumptions. Such self-awareness would be difficult to achieve within their own cultural environments, where individuals are often blind to their cultural frames.

Interestingly, while Earley and Ang's model assigns equal weight to the cognitive, metacognitive, motivational, and behavioral components of CQ, my findings suggest that cultural metacognition plays a more central role in shaping cognitive and behavioral responses. This deductively derived compositional model does not fully capture the relational dynamics and the open discussions that emerged as crucial for navigating cultural differences.

Furthermore, participants demonstrated relational skills, creating supportive and positive interactions, which is key to both personal contentment and task completion. Thomas et al.'s model also emphasizes perceptual and adaptive skills, which were apparent in teams that discussed cultural misunderstandings and gradually developed strategies to manage differences, particularly around time management and project timeliness.

A significant insight that emerged from this study, largely overlooked by the CQ literature, is the role of urgency in shaping collective CQ. All teams reported experiencing moments of

heightened pressure, particularly as deadlines approached. These moments triggered processes that accelerated team learning, especially in areas such as work organization and open communication. The response to this urgency varied across cultures and was influenced by individual personality traits. Participants from task-oriented cultures often responded by imposing stricter schedules, sometimes perceived as authoritarian by others, which lead to occasional misunderstandings and conflicts.

Conversely, the importance of urgency is well-recognized in educational contexts, particularly within the High Impact that Lasts (HILL) framework proposed by Dochy and Segers, (2018). It is regarded as a fundamental component and the initial trigger for the team learning process. This connection with education studies highlights the need for a more interdisciplinary approach, linking CQ research with insights from other research fields.

Furthermore, the development of collective CQ appears to require a balance of team effort and stress-relieving activities, such as humor and play, which will be elaborated on in the next sections. The interplay between effort and stress relief is critical. While excessive stress can be paralyzing, moderate levels of pressure appear to facilitate the learning process. As observed in childhood development, play is an essential component of learning, highlighting the potential for playful, structured interventions in fostering collective CQ.

How Context Shapes Collective Cultural Intelligence

The findings of this study underscore the critical influence of contextual factors on the development of collective CQ. Cultural intelligence does not emerge in isolation; it is shaped by the external environment (e.g., national and organizational culture) and the internal team structure (e.g., autonomy, leadership dynamics, and psychological safety).

In fact, contextual factors such as team culture, whether supportive or achievement-oriented (Shin et al., 2016), and external pressures like deadlines or task requirements, significantly

influenced how teams navigated cultural differences. These findings align with Zellmer-Bruhn and Maloney's (2020) IMOI+C framework, which identifies context as a critical factor in team processes. My research extends this perspective by demonstrating that cultural intelligence is co-constructed through team interactions, shaped by both external constraints (e.g., educational or organizational expectations) and internal team dynamics (e.g., levels of diversity, autonomy, and Team Intercultural Agreements).

More specifically, the Dutch educational context exerted a significant influence on the cultural interactions and shaped the development of collective cultural intelligence. Key contextual characteristics such as low power distance, high individualism, and a strong emphasis on student autonomy (Hofstede et al., 2010) formed the backdrop against which team dynamics played out. Indeed, in line with Hofstede's cultural dimensions, Dutch education encourages open communication, initiative-taking, and equality between students and teachers. Within the minor program, these values were reflected in the absence of formal class structures, the minimal role of hierarchy, and the requirement for self-managed learning. Students were not only permitted but expected to speak up, question authority, and take ownership of team processes. For many participants, particularly those from cultures with high power distance or more collectivist norms, this environment was initially disorienting but ultimately transformative. It demanded a reconfiguration of familiar ways of learning and collaborating.

The program structure further reinforced these cultural expectations. Students were tasked with solving real-world sustainability problems through interdisciplinary teamwork, without predefined instructions. These ambiguous, open-ended tasks required teams to invent their own frameworks for collaboration. Consequently, the emergence of shared norms and values, hallmarks of negotiated culture, was catalyzed by the structural need for interdependence and co-created solutions.

Moreover, the task characteristics added to another layer of complexity. With no standard evaluations or rigid deliverables, teams had to define what “good work” meant to them, negotiate roles based on emerging strengths, and address interpersonal differences without external mediation. This high level of freedom placed cultural assumptions in sharp relief and made their negotiation an integral part of the work process itself.

These findings suggest that the emergence of collective CQ is not solely a function of interpersonal dynamics but is also deeply contingent on environmental cues and institutional norms. While the Dutch setting provided a culturally permissive and pedagogically supportive framework for experimenting with new behaviors, such processes may not unfold similarly in contexts characterized by rigid hierarchies, standardized curricula, or passive learning models. In such environments, the lack of space for reflection or autonomy may constrain opportunities for negotiation and co-construction of cultural norms. Thus, the contextual configuration observed in this study, combining individual responsibility, ambiguity tolerance, and open feedback, is not universally replicable, but rather an enabling condition. Future research should investigate how variations in institutional and national culture affect the pathways through which collective CQ is formed.

Beyond the influence of national culture, the internal team environment played a crucial role in CQ development. Data suggest that psychological safety, a shared belief that the team environment is safe for interpersonal risk-taking (Edmondson, 1999), was crucial in fostering the emergence of collective cultural intelligence. However, perceptions of psychological safety vary across cultures (Prosviriakova & Khapova, 2024). Numerous instances exist where team members from collectivist cultures with high power distance and high-context communication styles hesitated to speak up or openly discuss team issues. This hesitation was exacerbated in teams with predominantly introverted members. One such team experienced significant organizational, communication, and motivational challenges, finding it difficult to

engage all members in the project. It was only when a severe crisis emerged, close to the project deadline, and all other options were exhausted, that they cautiously initiated a dialogue. Despite the impasse, they refrained from involving the coach to avoid hurting the feelings of the disengaged member. On the other hand, participants from successful teams highlighted that discussing sensitive issues, such as work quality and engagement levels, was facilitated by an environment where they felt comfortable sharing concerns without fear of judgment. Teams that established psychological safety were more likely to engage in metacognitive reflection and adaptive behaviors, reinforcing the idea that CQ develops in settings where individuals feel safe to experiment and learn from mistakes. This is particularly relevant to Thomas et al.'s (2008) emphasis on the learning aspect of CQ, as a safe space provided fertile ground for learning from cultural missteps and adapting behavior accordingly.

Furthermore, my findings show that the external environment serves both as a challenge, pushing participants out of their comfort zones, and as a catalyst for CQ development. This resonates with Brannen and Salk's view (2000) that external pressures (e.g., organizational or environmental demands) compel individuals to engage in cultural negotiation, ultimately enhancing their cultural intelligence.

Data reveal that the intercultural team dynamics within the self-managed teams introduces additional layers of complexity. Diversity in work styles, feedback expectations, and engagement levels leads to moments of cultural friction, requiring participants to negotiate their working approaches (Cheng et al., 2012). Team members interpret issues through the lens of their cultural backgrounds, and this culturally determined sense-making shapes how they perceive challenges and opportunities within the team. The self-directed nature of these teams creates a unique structure where participants have greater autonomy but also more responsibility for navigating cultural differences. Unlike traditional hierarchical teams, where leaders set the cultural tone, the self-managed teams in my study must develop their own

norms and manage conflicts autonomously. In this context, the internal structure of the teams acts as both a constraint and an enabler of CQ development, depending on how effectively members navigate these negotiations. The intricate relationship between external and internal contextual factors highlights the complexity of developing collective cultural intelligence, emphasizing the necessity for teams to adeptly navigate these dynamics to achieve effectiveness and cohesion.

Local's Myopia

To conclude this section, I address an aspect that emerged from data that, as far as I could assess, remains unexplored by the existing CQ literature. It concerns the experience of local students in multicultural teams. While foreign team members often expect to adapt to the dominant culture, local members can feel unexpectedly "displaced" in their own context. I conceptualize this dynamic as *local's myopia*: a cognitive and emotional blind spot in which local team members assume they are culturally neutral or normative and therefore exempt from adaptation. This myopia manifests in resistance to adjusting communication styles, assumptions about group norms, or expectations of "default" cultural practices. It aligns with social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), which suggests that individuals derive part of their self-concept from group membership. Local students, identifying with the majority or host culture, may unconsciously perceive themselves as the in-group and others as needing to assimilate.

Conceptually, this stands in contrast but complementary to the well-established idea of liabilities of foreignness (Denk, Kaufmann, & Roesch, 2012), which, although originally developed at the organizational level of analysis, can be meaningfully extended to the team level. This concept refers to the disadvantages experienced by individuals or entities operating in foreign environments due to their limited familiarity with local norms, institutional systems, and social networks. While foreign members may lack local knowledge, local

members may lack intercultural reflexivity, assuming their norms are universally applicable. The *local's myopia* thereby becomes a liability of familiarity, a lack of adaptation born from overconfidence in cultural self-evidence. My findings suggest that this can undermine team cohesion and performance, particularly when local members underestimate the adjustments needed in multicultural environments.

Recognizing this dynamic has practical implications. It suggests that CQ development efforts must target both local and international participants, challenging the assumption that only those entering a new culture must adapt. In highly globalized settings like international education, the ability of locals to recalibrate their cultural assumptions is just as critical as the foreigners' willingness to adapt. Addressing this blind spot may foster greater mutual learning and help avoid asymmetric expectations that hinder team dynamics and equity.

From Conflict to Cohesion: The Team Dynamics Underpinning Collective Cultural Intelligence

Consistent with the view of cultural intelligence as a dynamic and evolving phenomenon, this study reveals that successful teams move from early-stage conflict and cultural friction to later-stage cohesion and collaboration through key interpersonal and cognitive processes such as effective communication, conflict resolution, shared leadership, and cohesion. These processes enabled teams to leverage cultural diversity as an asset rather than an obstacle. The findings align with research by Moynihan et al. (2006) and Earley and Gardener (2005), which emphasize trust, collective optimism, and a strong team identity as key facilitators of intercultural collaboration.

Creativity, Divergent Thinking, and Conflict Resolution

A recurrent theme in participants' reflections was the role of creativity in navigating cultural differences. When reflecting on their "moments of glory," participants frequently highlighted the creative aspects of their work as particularly rewarding. They also expressed a sense of

pride and ownership when presenting their project achievements, and well as the enjoyment derived from informal interaction and team bonding.

Creativity stemming from diverse perspectives and divergent thinking of team members was evident in all successful teams. In loosely defined projects with considerable freedom of choice and responsibility, teams had to manage uncertainty and determine their course of action. When these teams embraced the project, their motivation and sense of empowerment enabled them to experience cultural diversity as an asset. These conditions enhanced their creativity and facilitated the successful completion of the project while achieving greater team satisfaction, a stronger sense of identification, and heightened cohesion among team members.

In Stahl and Maznevski's (2021) framework internal team dynamics mediates the impact of cultural diversity. They propose that divergence (creative conflict and innovation) and barriers to convergence (miscommunication and conflict) affect team outcomes. In the teams that I observed, and particularly in those identified as successful, cultural diversity initially led to misunderstandings but eventually fostered creative problem-solving through negotiation and open discussions. For example, the divergence in working styles became an opportunity for teams to learn from each other, as reflected in their growing willingness to discuss disagreements openly.

Groupthink and Cultural Divisions

While some teams successfully navigated the transition from conflict to cohesion, others remained stuck in patterns of conformity or cultural division, revealing the fragile nature of team dynamics in multicultural settings. Surprisingly, despite the expectation that multicultural teams would experience less groupthink (Janis, 1972), one team exhibited a strong tendency towards conformity, which marginalized a highly creative member. This individual, a trained architect, brought novel approaches to problem-solving, but the team's

majority culture resisted her ideas. These dynamics generated tensions with repeated efforts to conform the divergent thinker to the prevailing group norms. Only when a crisis stalled the project did the team recognize her contributions, leading to a shift in group dynamics and an eventual breakthrough. The observation of the predominant groupthink among the majority of team members does not align with the idea of less groupthink proposed in the theoretical framework by Stahl and Maznevski (2021).

Moreover, several teams exhibited groupthink along cultural lines, particularly between task-oriented and relationship-oriented members. In some cases, this division resulted in the alienation of the creative individuals, with task-oriented members ultimately imposing their approach and completing the project independently. The dichotomy within the team nurtured tensions and a lack of cohesion stemming from deep-level assumptions about relationships and decision-making processes. These findings highlight the complex interplay between team dynamics and cultural factors in shaping groupthink and its impact on team outcomes.

Collaboration Through Cultural Negotiation

The fusion model by Janssens and Brett (2006) provides a useful lens for understanding how teams navigate cultural diversity. It emphasizes the importance of collaboration through the coexistence of cultural precepts. Rather than imposing a dominant cultural approach, successful teams engaged in ongoing dialogue and mutual adjustments, blending different cultural perspectives into a shared team identity. Teams that cultivated an environment where members felt safe to express divergent views were better able to reconcile cultural differences through collaborative negotiation.

Referring to Bückner and Korzilius (2024) team cultural intelligence dimensions (TCQ), data analysis showed that engaging in a dialogue with a team member possessing unique information to contribute, facilitated the process of information extraction and sharing. In addition to cultural metacognition and coexistence, I also observed the TCQ dimensions of

meaningful participation and of team openness in successful teams. However, instances of limited language proficiency among individual team members hindered effective information exchange, creating challenges for the entire team. In such cases, teams often struggled to involve the less proficient speaker and encourage their active contribution. As a result, language proficiency has proven to be a significant factor in achieving team collective cultural intelligence, particularly when addressing problems. This finding aligns with Bücker and Korzilius dimension of openness to language diversity.

In addition to the well-documented team processes, this study brings to light several less examined but essential dynamics that influence how collective cultural intelligence develops over time. Foremost among these is the temporal trajectory of adaptation.

The Temporal Dimension of Adaptation

Despite its critical role in various developmental processes, time is often overlooked in models of cultural intelligence. Findings from my longitudinal study indicate that adaptation requires several months before producing noticeable results. Most teams reported experiencing effective and positive working relationships only in the later stages of the project, usually around 14 to 15 weeks after initiation. While some teams showed steady, continuous progress, others experienced slower development initially but evolved rapidly towards the end. These findings suggest the need to integrate temporal dynamics into CQ research to better capture the complexity of adaptation over time.

This temporal trajectory is not only empirical but also conceptual. The data consistently reveal that CQ is not developed in a linear or uniform manner. Rather, it unfolds as an ongoing, temporal process, shaped by evolving team dynamics, turning points, and iterative reflection. Critical incidents, such as misunderstandings, role conflicts, or missed deadlines, served as catalysts for deeper cultural negotiation. Teams that successfully developed CQ often did so not by avoiding difficulties, but by engaging with them over time, adjusting

expectations, and reconfiguring group norms through cycles of trial, error, and collective learning.

This realization of temporality has implications for training and development designs. It suggests that CQ training should be an ongoing process rather than a single intervention. However, the latter can support and accelerate the process. Given the uniqueness of every team's composition and situation, interventions could focus on fostering cultural metacognition while helping align goals and expectations, as well as facilitating team building.

Influence of Introverts and Extroverts on Team Cultural Intelligence

This thesis posits that the development of cultural intelligence in teams is a multifaceted process that extends beyond the mere aggregation of individual cultural backgrounds and professional experience. The findings from this study suggest that the psychological profiles of team members, including their personality traits, also play a role in shaping collective CQ. Specifically, the distinction between introverted and extroverted individuals is relevant to how team members adapt to new cultural settings. Introverted individuals may approach cultural differences with a reflective and cautious mindset, potentially leading to deeper but slower integration of new cultural norms. In contrast, extroverted individuals might engage more readily with new cultural environments, fostering quicker but possibly less nuanced, if not less effective, cultural adaptation. Further investigation into these psychological dimensions could yield valuable insights into optimizing team effectiveness in multicultural settings.

Balancing Work and Leisure: Relational Levity as a Catalyst for Collective Cultural Intelligence

Balancing work and leisure emerged in this study not merely as a matter of time management or stress prevention, but as a relational process that plays a formative role in developing collective cultural intelligence. Informal social interactions, including shared humor, casual

bonding, and culturally curious conversations, proved to be more than moments of relaxation. They created relational levity, a dynamic marked by emotional openness, trust-building, and interpersonal ease. These micro-interactions enabled team members to understand one another's personalities and work styles, diffuse tension, and build psychological safety. Through activities such as joking, sharing stories about cultural traditions, or taking light-hearted breaks, participants were able to navigate cultural complexity more effectively, laying the groundwork for deeper engagement and reflective learning.

Many respondents emphasized that these informal moments, whether in breaks during team meetings or in social gatherings outside the formal workspace, were not distractions, but facilitators of team cohesion. Conversations about seemingly trivial topics such as zodiac signs, music, or favorite foods helped uncover personal values and cultural norms in a non-confrontational way. This openness fostered interpersonal trust, allowed team members to express vulnerability, and ultimately enhanced their willingness to address difficult topics and resolve conflict more constructively.

These findings support the idea that culturally intelligent teams do not merely compromise between differing cultural styles but rather engage in ongoing negotiation of shared norms. Teams varied in their assumptions about the legitimacy or value of socializing as part of the work process. For example, participants from relationship-oriented cultures saw informal engagement as a way to build trust, while task-oriented members sometimes viewed such interactions as inefficient or off-topic. Yet, the teams that developed a shared understanding of the importance of both connection and productivity were more likely to experience stronger cohesion and demonstrate collective CQ. This process reflects not just compromise but co-creation: the development of team norms that integrate the emotional-relational preferences of diverse members.

A novel contribution of this study lies in identifying trust and humor as not merely byproducts of positive team interactions but as active relational mechanisms that enable the development of collective CQ. Humor, especially, emerged as a cross-cultural equalizer, reducing interpersonal tension and fostering mutual empathy. These shared moments of laughter and playfulness enhanced group resilience and signaled safety, especially in moments of uncertainty or disagreement. The relational levity that emerged through these practices was not superficial; it contributed meaningfully to how teams managed ambiguity, expressed dissent, and remained engaged over time.

Finally, this study proposes expanding the conceptualization of CQ by incorporating relational-emotional mechanisms such as trust, levity, and shared play. These dynamics, often overlooked in mainstream models (Earley & Ang, 2003), are shown to be central to the emergence of collective CQ. The concept of relational levity thus joins cultural metacognition as a key processual construct. It underscores that CQ is not only learned through reflection or instruction but also felt, co-created, and experienced within psychologically safe, emotionally intelligent team cultures.

The Negotiated Culture Perspective

A closer examination of the data brought up another concept that may be of great relevance to my study: the negotiated culture. From the perspective of the negotiated culture approach posited by Brannen and Salk (2000), an individual's culture of origin, defined as the cultural orientation they bring to the work setting, serves as a starting point. However, each person has a unique blend of cultures and subcultures, including national, regional, familial, professional, and ethnic backgrounds. In certain contexts, their culture of origin may be marginally present or, conversely, hyper-represented, embodying mainstream national cultural attributes to a strong degree. I observed that participants in this international program often emphasized not being typical representatives of their countries, rejecting stereotypical views of their national

cultures. Instead, they preferred to highlight commonalities with other team members, particularly by emphasizing shared attributes from professional or business cultures. Clearly, by choosing to study abroad, they demonstrated curiosity and openness towards other cultures, which are essential qualities for developing cultural intelligence.

According to Brannen and Salk (2000), individuals use their diverse cultural identities and affiliations to influence and participate in a new work setting through cultural negotiation. In self-managed teams, participants negotiate their own team cultures. Their cultural elements are blended and adjusted through ongoing negotiations, reconciling divergent approaches to time management, communication, and feedback. These negotiations are not typically formalized discussions, but rather informal social interactions through which shared meanings emerge (Gertsen and Zølner, 2020). The goal is not simply to adopt dominant cultural practices (e.g., the Dutch style of direct communication) but to find a balance that works for the specific team context. The created team culture is not fixed; it emerges dynamically through the everyday experiences and challenges of working together. At the same time participants' cultural intelligence evolves as they adapt to the unique educational environment and team contexts. Data suggest that the resulting team culture and cultural intelligence are fluid. Changes due to external factors can trigger a reconfiguration of the team as it adapts to new situations. From this perspective, collective cultural intelligence remains a work-in-progress phenomenon which underscores the need for adaptive, context-sensitive approaches to CQ development.

Notably, cultural negotiations are not always conscious or intentional; however, they often result in the establishment of shared practices. This process involves compromise and adaptation, wherein team members may adopt practices from other cultures or create new, hybrid practices that integrate elements from multiple cultural traditions (Brannen and Salk, 2000). In this study, such negotiations are often prompted by specific issues, such as deadlines

for milestone deliveries or challenges that require collaborative problem-solving. The program's structure, along with the supportive environment fostering psychological safety is designed to facilitate these negotiations. While coaches were available to intervene when necessary, experience indicates that their involvement was rarely required.

The Development of Effective Training Interventions

Building on these insights, it becomes evident that effective training interventions must be thoughtfully designed to address the complexities of multicultural team interactions. Throughout the extensive data collection process, while drawing from my experience as a training and development professional, I concluded that implementing a serious game could effectively tackle the issues raised during multicultural team interactions. In fact, the literature review on training programs designed to enhance cultural intelligence in teams suggests that cognitive-based approaches may fall short in equipping individuals in for authentic cultural interactions (Fang et al., 2018). Instead, it advocates for hands-on, experiential approaches (MacNab, 2012) which can be achieved by playing a serious game, rather than traditional training sessions or a workshop.

The game promotes experiential learning in an engaging and playful manner while providing a structured and meaningful interaction with team members from different cultures (Pettigrew, 1998). In this study, it is part of a tripartite intervention envisioned as a comprehensive approach to enhance team cultural intelligence. Its primary objective was to raise awareness of the intercultural challenges inherent in teamwork thus developing cultural metacognition, fostering open discussion, and ultimately preventing conflicts. These efforts were intended to result in a shared understanding of relevant values and norms, leading to the creation of guidelines for effective intercultural behavior within the team.

Each component of the intervention was designed to reinforce the others. Specifically, (1) the team game, (2) the discussion of intercultural dilemmas, and (3) the drafting of the

intercultural agreement were conceived as complementary actions. Together, they aimed to facilitate the most critical processes in the development of cultural intelligence (CQ): building strong interpersonal relationships and establishing an effective organizational structure. As a result, certain tasks and activities overlapped across multiple components of the intervention. For example, discussions about common goals and expectations appeared in both components 1 and 3; sharing past professional experiences and personal strengths occurred in components 1 and 3; handling challenges and disagreements was addressed in all three components; and procedures and work agreements were addressed in components 1 and 3, while interpersonal relationships were emphasized across all three.

During the validation process, the team game emerged as the most appreciated and effective component, as it inherently incorporated aspects of the other two intervention methods.

Although the Team Intercultural Agreement was completed as part of the process, it was neither actively utilized nor referenced by the teams. The primary value lies in the process of its creation, which provided a structured opportunity for team members to articulate and align their expectations, fostering shared understanding and greater group cohesion. In the context of this study, this outcome is not particularly unexpected. Participants were operating in an informal and egalitarian environment where initiative, feedback and creativity were strongly encouraged. Therefore, it aligns with the internal context and the particular culture that it cultivates. However, it is conceivable that more formal interventions, such as facilitated discussions on intercultural dilemmas and the drafting of team intercultural agreements, may be more effective in environments characterized by hierarchical organizational cultures or cultures that emphasize competition and strong orientation toward goal achievement.

Several factors contributed to the effectiveness of the game:

1. Experiential learning: Unlike theoretical discussions or written agreements, the game provided a hands-on learning experience. Participants actively engaged in game tasks that

reflected real challenges, such as communication barriers, task allocation, and goal alignment. This experiential learning allowed team members not only to intellectually understand the importance of cultural awareness but also to experience its impact firsthand. This approach aligns with research suggesting that learning through experience often leads to more lasting changes in behavior and mindset (MacNab, 2012).

2. Interactive and engaging format: The game's interactive structure made it enjoyable for participants, which, in turn, encouraged more natural participation. Compared to formal meetings or drafting agreements, the game allowed team members to relax, show more of their personality, and engage more openly. Participants noted how the relaxed environment of the game enabled them to express their concerns and frustrations in ways that they might not have done in formal discussions.

3. Holistic integration of team-building elements: The game effectively incorporated key elements of team building, such as role clarification, goal setting, and problem-solving, which were mirrored in later discussions and the intercultural agreement. For example, participants engaged in tasks that helped clarify each team member's strengths and weaknesses, which later fed into team discussions on how to allocate tasks more effectively. This overlap between game tasks and real team challenges helped bridge the gap between theory and practice, making the learning process more seamless and applicable.

4. Cultivating stronger interpersonal relationships: One of the game's primary benefits was its ability to foster interpersonal connections. It created a setting where team members could better understand one another's communication styles, cultural habits, and work preferences. This led to more empathy and reduced misunderstandings. The game allowed team members to become aware of cultural differences in a non-confrontational way, helping them navigate these differences more effectively in future interactions.

5. Addressing team dynamics and issues: The game served as a safe space for discussing interpersonal issues that might otherwise remain unspoken. For example, participants were able to openly talk about challenges such as uneven participation, late arrivals, and lack of communication. These discussions, facilitated through the game, provided clarity on group expectations and solutions for improving collaboration. By tackling these issues in a non-threatening, gamified format, participants felt more empowered to address conflicts and challenges in future team interactions.

Positioning the Study's Contributions within the Existing Literature

To situate the findings of this study within the broader field of cultural intelligence, the following section categorizes the contributions into three dimensions: (1) those that confirm established theoretical insights, (2) those that extend underexplored or peripheral dimensions, and (3) those that introduce novel constructs or mechanisms not previously addressed in literature. This structure offers conceptual clarity by distinguishing between reaffirmed findings, such as the importance of cultural metacognition, and emergent insights, such as relational levity and *local's myopia* that deepen our understanding of how collective CQ develops within multicultural teams. In particular, the concept of *local's myopia* challenges prevailing assumptions in the literature by foregrounding the adaptive demands placed not only on international but also on local team members. This structure further supports the integration of the Negotiated Culture perspective, which frames CQ as an emergent, co-constructed phenomenon shaped by dynamic team interactions over time. The classification presented here underscores the integrative and interdisciplinary nature of this research, connecting CQ theory with perspectives from organizational behavior, team psychology, and intercultural dynamics.

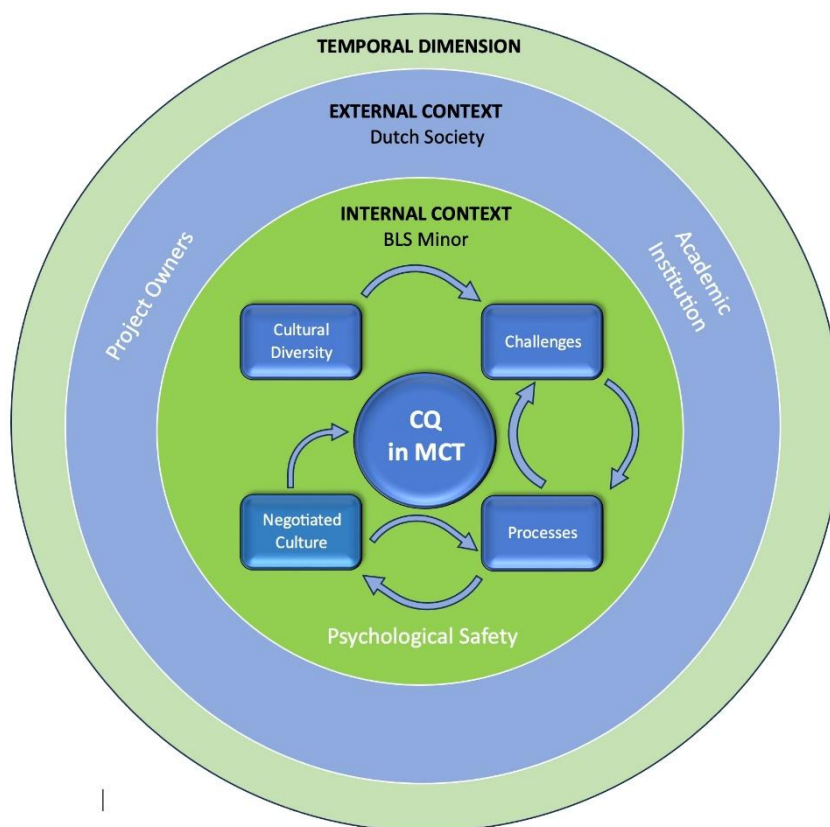
TABLE 3. Summary of Theoretical Contributions

Category	Finding	Literature Reference
Confirmed	Cultural metacognition as a key driver	Thomas et al. (2008); Van Dyne et al. (2015)
Confirmed	Relevance of context (national, institutional, team) in shaping CQ	Zellmer-Bruhn & Maloney (2020)
Confirmed	Role of Psychological Safety in intercultural adaptation	Edmondson (1999); Prosviriakova & Kharpova (2024)
Confirmed	Team processes: open communication, conflict resolution, shared leadership, trust, etc.	Earley & Ang (2003); Moynihan et al. (2006)
Confirmed	Creativity and divergent thinking, but also presence of groupthink	Stahl & Maznevski (2021)
Confirmed	Cultural negotiation in diverse teams	Janssens & Brett (2006)
Confirmed	Team cultural intelligence dimensions (TCQ)	Bücker and Korzilius (2024)
Underexplored	Temporality of CQ development	Neglected in CQ literature; highlighted by this study
Underexplored	Differences in introvert vs. extrovert adaptation paces	This study, personality psychology (trait theories)
Underexplored	Role of urgency in accelerating collective CQ development and team learning	Dochy & Segers (2018); HILL model
Underexplored	Informal social interactions and levity as a relational mechanism for CQ development	This study
Underexplored	Balancing work and leisure as a cultural negotiation process fostering team cohesion	This study
Underexplored	Affective-emotional dynamics (e.g., empathy, levity, trust) as enablers of reflection and adaptive learning	This study
Underexplored	Collective CQ as co-constructed and fluid	This study
New	Concept of <i>local's myopia</i>	This study (conceptualized by author)
New	Serious game as experiential CQ training	Derived from MacNab (2012); Fang et al. (2018)
New	Tripartite intervention model (game, discussion, Team Intercultural Agreement)	This study (designed by author)
New	Application of Negotiated Culture theory at team level	Brannen & Salk (2000), extended in this study

Conceptual Frameworks

To synthesize the discussion and connect it to the key concepts of the literature review, I propose a comprehensive, overarching framework for understanding the emergence of cultural intelligence in multicultural teams (Figure 10). Additionally, I posit a more specific framework focused on the key mechanisms driving the development of collective cultural intelligence (Figure 11).

FIGURE 10 Conceptual Framework of Cultural Intelligence (CQ) in Multicultural Teams (MCT)

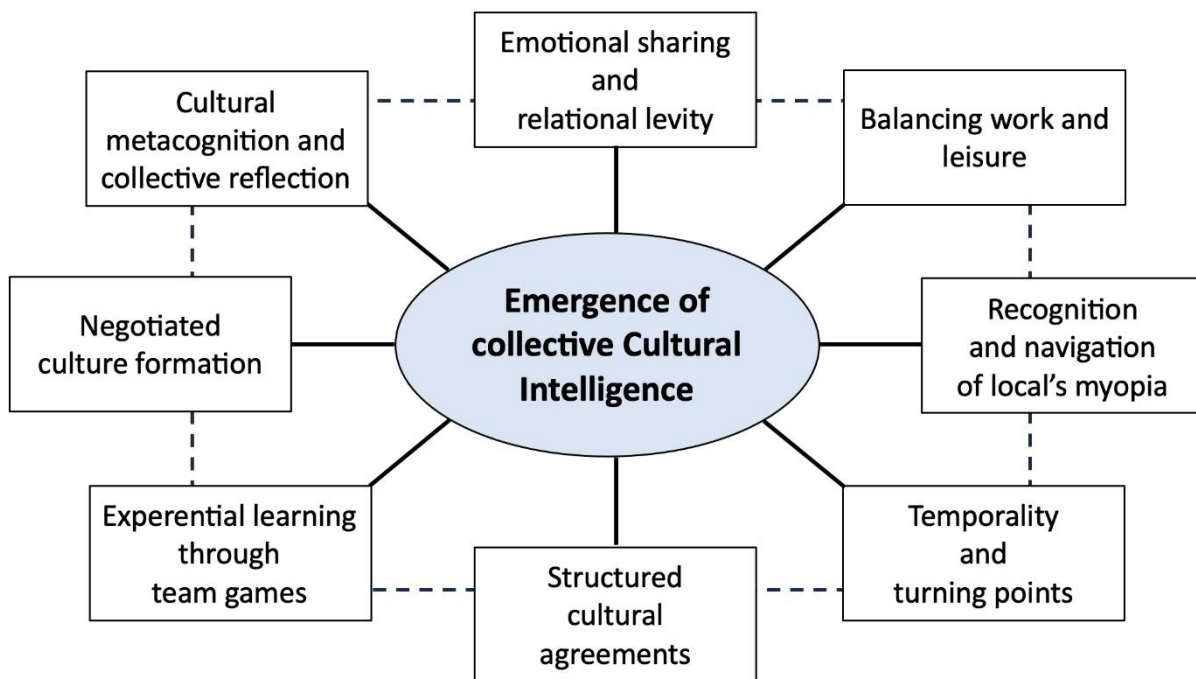


A multicultural team (MCT) operates within a specific context, influenced both by its internal organizational environment and external factors, and developing dynamically over time. In this case study, the external context encompasses the Dutch society in its broader sense, including the specific academic institution, and the project owners, whether enterprises or other types of organizations that have posed challenges to the teams.

The internal environment is shaped by the rules, structures, and expectations set by the international minor program Business Leadership Sustainability (BLS) and its coaches, alongside the climate and learning community culture it fosters. A foundational element of this internal context is the psychological safety that permeates the team's environment.

Within these circumstances, a newly formed multicultural team begins to address its assigned tasks and navigate cultural challenges while establishing processes aimed at accomplishing its project assignments. The interactions and cultural negotiations that unfold during this process, embedded in the internal and external context, influence the team negotiated culture and determine whether collective cultural intelligence emerges. This outcome depends on the successful realization of key factors, including mutual trust, respect, open communication, cultural metacognition, information sharing, meaningful participation and balancing work with leisure during teamwork.

FIGURE 11 Key Mechanisms Facilitating Collective CQ in Multicultural Teams



To foreground the study's most significant empirical contributions, particularly the relational and developmental dimensions of collective cultural intelligence, I present a framework that synthesizes the key mechanisms driving its emergence in multicultural teams. Grounded in qualitative data and enriched by theoretical insights from research on team trust, cohesion, and negotiated culture, this framework conceptualizes collective CQ as a co-constructed, evolving capability rather than a static trait.

The framework illustrates how multicultural teams develop collective cultural intelligence through a constellation of emergent, interactive factors. These are shaped by team diversity, interpersonal dynamics, and the broader contextual environment, and unfold over time through cycles of adaptation, reflection, and co-construction. They include:

- **Cultural metacognition and collective reflection**, which enable teams to recognize and adapt to cultural assumptions through cycles of feedback, awareness, and meaning making
- **Emotional sharing and relational levity**, including humor and informal bonding, which create affective trust and psychological safety while reducing interpersonal tension
- **Balancing work and leisure**, which supports engagement, diffuses stress, and creates space for culturally curious and meaningful interaction
- **Recognition and navigation of local's myopia**, which challenges host-culture members' assumption of normativity and promotes mutual adaptation
- **Negotiated culture formation**, through which diverse teams co-create shared norms by aligning communication styles, expectations, and values
- **Experiential learning through team games**, offering low-risk, playful contexts for cultural exploration, problem-solving, and bonding
- **Structured cultural agreements**, which formalize emerging team norms and help align expectations
- **Temporality and turning points**, underscoring that CQ does not develop linearly, but evolves through time via critical incidents and collective reflection

These mechanisms operate recursively and interdependently, enabling teams to build a shared capacity to recognize, reflect on, and respond to cultural differences. The framework illustrates collective CQ not as a fixed trait or outcome, but as an emergent property of sustained, situated, and relational team interaction.

By visualizing these key mechanisms, the framework clarifies how multicultural teams evolve over time, from early-stage friction to later-stage cohesion. It also provides a foundation for

designing practical interventions such as team games or guided cultural reflections that intentionally support the formation of collective CQ.

Contributions to Theory

This study contributes to the multilevel perspective on cultural intelligence by advancing an understanding of how cultural intelligence emerges at team level. Addressing the scarcity of qualitative, process-oriented research, it maps the dynamic processes that underpin the development of collective cultural intelligence. Specifically, it highlights the role of balancing work and leisure, humor and informal social interaction in strengthening interpersonal relationships and creating trust. It also explores connections to other fields of research such as educational studies (e.g., Arikan et al., 2022; Dochy & Segers, 2018), particularly regarding the impact of urgency on the development of cultural intelligence in teams. This study extends Thomas et al.'s (2008) framework, which emphasizes cultural metacognition, by demonstrating its centrality in regulating team behaviors and fostering cultural adaptability. In parallel, it highlights trust and humor as underrecognized relational mechanisms that catalyze reflective dialogue, psychological safety, and emotional engagement, offering novel insights rarely emphasized in dominant cultural intelligence frameworks.

Moreover, this study offers new insights into the negotiated culture perspective (Brannen & Salk, 2000), illustrating how team members dynamically co-create cultural practices through informal interactions and dialogue, rather than simply adopting dominant cultural norms.

Findings indicate that cultural intelligence evolves over time, highlighting the importance of the temporal dimension of adaptation. This study advocates for incorporating the temporal dimension into the cultural intelligence studies, aligning with longitudinal approaches to capture the full complexity of the phenomenon.

Foremost, the concept of *local's myopia*, introduced in this research, opens new theoretical avenues. It refers to the difficulty local members face in adapting to multicultural dynamics, even within their familiar cultural contexts. This phenomenon highlights the nuanced challenges of intercultural collaboration and suggests the need for further theoretical exploration into the interplay between local and global cultural dynamics in teams.

In sum, this study advances the existing literature on cultural intelligence by integrating both theoretical and contextual elements, providing a more holistic understanding of how cultural intelligence develops and evolves in multicultural teams.

Contributions to Practice

This study offers actionable insights for professionals working in multicultural and interdisciplinary teams, particularly regarding how to foster and sustain collective CQ. The practical contributions are directly informed by the study's key empirical findings and are structured around the mechanisms identified in the second framework (Figure 11).

1. Mechanism-Based Framework for Intervention Design

Based on the eight empirically grounded mechanisms, including cultural metacognition, relational levity, negotiated norms, and temporality, the framework can guide the design of tailored training and coaching interventions. These mechanisms help practitioners understand that collective CQ is not a sum of individual traits, but a dynamic, relational, and co-constructed process within teams.

2. Team Type-Specific Recommendations

The findings suggest that different types of multicultural teams may require different strategies. For example:

- Hierarchical or task-oriented teams may benefit more from structured interventions like team intercultural agreements, which clarify expectations early.
- Flat or self-managed teams, such as student project teams, benefit most from playful, experiential tools like serious games that encourage informal bonding, humor, and psychological safety.

3. Inclusion of Local Team Members in CQ Training

The concept of *local's myopia* underscores that locals often overlook the need to adapt, assuming their norms are default. Interventions should target both international and local members, challenging assumptions of cultural neutrality and promoting reciprocal adaptation.

4. Coaching Emphasis on Temporality and Critical Incidents

Since collective CQ evolves through turning points and pressure moments, coaches should help teams identify and reflect on these critical incidents. Developmental trajectories differ across teams; interventions should be staggered and responsive over time, not single-session events.

5. Integrating Humor and Informal Interaction

The concept of relational levity demonstrates that informal, emotionally intelligent behaviors e.g., joking, cultural storytelling, lighthearted breaks, build trust and cohesion. Coaches and team leaders should explicitly create time and space for these interactions, not treat them as distractions.

6. Gamified Learning for Real-World Simulation

The tripartite training intervention, including a serious game, intercultural dilemma discussion, and agreement drafting, offers a model for experiential team development.

The serious game was effective in surfacing challenges such as uneven participation, directness norms, and role clarity, offering a safe rehearsal space for team functioning.

7. Scalability to Organizational Settings

While developed in an educational context, the mechanisms may apply to professional teams in creative, knowledge-based, or humanitarian sectors. Organizations with diverse, project-based teams e.g., consulting, international NGOs, cross-border R&D can adapt these tools to their settings.

The practical lessons from this study indicate that collective CQ cannot be cultivated through isolated workshops or cultural briefings alone. Instead, interventions must reflect the lived experiences of teams, focusing on emotional trust-building, real-time reflection, and dynamic norm-setting. Whether through structured agreements or playful exploration, culturally diverse teams thrive when their development is supported holistically: cognitively, emotionally, and contextually.

Limitations

This study is set in a specific instructional context where I assumed a dual role as both an insider, member of the learning community, and outsider as observer. A teacher-student dynamic inevitably shaped the internal environment. This power dynamic inherent in the teacher's position within instructional interactions, might not be expected in a professional setting.

Another limitation of this study could be the self-selection bias present in the chosen population. Participants exhibited above-average traits and motivations, such as curiosity and openness towards other cultures, which influenced their decision to study abroad and work in multicultural teams.

While the outcomes of this case study are not generalizable to all business environments, it is plausible to consider that they can inform cases of other specific industries or fields where multicultural teams are common, and where the organizational culture aligns with that observed in this study. Based on the findings, industries or businesses characterized by collaborative, team-based work, with a focus on interpersonal relationships and relatively flat organizational hierarchies, are likely to benefit the most. Conversely, the more formal aspects of the intervention, such as drafting intercultural agreements, may be more effective in industries with hierarchical structures or competitive environments.

Examples of industries that could benefit from these findings include creative and innovation-driven sectors, such as tech startups, advertising, and media agencies. The findings could also be applied to fields such as education and research, as well as to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) focused on international development and humanitarian aid, where multicultural collaboration is key. More specifically, consulting and professional services, multinational project teams in global engineering, construction or supply chains, international joint ventures and similar could apply these findings to improve internal team dynamics.

Future Directions

The study revealed a phenomenon that I termed the *local's myopia*. It refers to situations where local team members struggle in multicultural environments when team dynamics do not align with their cultural expectations, even in their own familiar settings. Further investigation of this phenomenon could contribute to a broader theoretical conceptualization of cultural intelligence. Moreover, future studies could explore the temporality of the collective cultural intelligence development to gain deeper insight into the varying rates and trajectories of development experienced by multicultural teams. The pace at which these teams develop can vary depending on factors such as team composition, prior intercultural experience, team dynamics, and the specific challenges they encounter. Additionally, further

research can explore the impact of the intercultural agreement creation process in greater depth. The mere act of formulating such an agreement appears to influence the team dynamics, even when it is no longer explicitly referenced.

Finally, future research could delve into the role of psychological profiles, such as introversion and extroversion, in shaping team dynamics and cultural adaptation.

Understanding how these personality traits influence the development of collective cultural intelligence could provide valuable insights for optimizing team effectiveness in multicultural settings.

Conclusion

Cultural intelligence in multicultural teams is a dynamic, multi-layered phenomenon, deeply ingrained in the context in which it takes place. Rather than emerging from a single mechanism, CQ develops through iterative negotiations, experiential learning, and continuous adaptations. Both the team dynamics and the contextual influences are intricate and determining factors, thus excluding the application of a “one method fits all” when it comes to training. However, one aspect that can be pivotal in the facilitation of its development is the stimulation of informal social interaction. Fostering positive interpersonal relationships, supported by cultural curiosity and mutual respect, can enable open and effective communication. More significantly, cultivating a positive working environment with ample space for fun, and balancing work and relaxation, is conducive to effective teamwork. Consequently, an intervention such as a team game can help create a relaxed environment where team members can learn about one another’s communication styles, cultural habits, and work preferences, and become aware of cultural differences in a non-confrontational way. These, in turn, could lead to positive team outcomes both in terms of members’ wellbeing and goal achievement. In such circumstances, the role of fun and humor in balancing work and leisure becomes particularly important. Humor helps us to relax and lightens our life allowing

us to experience happiness. Laughter opens our hearts and minds liberating them for a while from the burden of our perhaps limiting thoughts. Smiling leads to accepting things that we could not do before and creates a new path forward. People who work in a playful and relaxed manner are possibly more efficient and creative than those working under stress without any joy. This is how humor becomes essential in a multicultural environment.

Another key insight from this study is that collective cultural intelligence (CQ) should be considered a work in progress. There is no final destination; it is an elusive phenomenon that changes over time. Being acculturated in different countries, work organizations or international environments does not guarantee smooth and efficient teamwork in a new cultural setting. Moving ahead can sometimes mean regression rather than progress, depending on the circumstances. This means that collective cultural intelligence cannot be easily grasped or predicted, making it a challenging area to study.

In the broader context of globalization and the increasing employment of multicultural teams, the development of collective cultural intelligence is of foremost importance. As the world becomes more interconnected, the ability to navigate and thrive in diverse cultural settings is essential for both individuals and organizations. Collective cultural intelligence enables teams to harness the strengths of their diverse members, fostering innovation, creativity, and resilience. It promotes mutual understanding and respect, which are crucial for building cohesive and effective teams in a globalized world.

Ultimately, the pursuit of collective cultural intelligence is not just about improving team effectiveness; it is about fostering a more inclusive and harmonious world. By embracing and valuing cultural diversity, we can create environments where everyone feels respected and empowered to contribute their unique perspectives. This, in turn, can lead to more equitable and just societies. Therefore, in a world increasingly plagued by geopolitical tensions,

xenophobia, and radical nationalism, the importance of developing collective cultural intelligence cannot be overstated.

The journey towards collective cultural intelligence is ongoing, but it is a journey worth undertaking for the betterment of humanity. As we continue to explore and understand this dynamic phenomenon, we pave the way for a future where cultural differences are celebrated, and collaboration across cultures becomes the norm. As Martin Luther King Jr. wisely stated, “We may have all come on different ships, but we are in the same boat now.”

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APPENDIX 1: Interviewees' Descriptive Data

ID	Age	Gender	Field/Discipline	Country	Team
1	19	F	Marketing Management	Germany	Team 1
2	21	F	Business Administration and Marketing	Mexico	Team 1
3	21	F	Commercial Economics	Italy	Team 2
4	20	F	Information Management	Poland	Team 2
5	22	F	Management and Entrepreneurship	Germany	Team 3
6	23	M	Biotechnology	Mexico	Team 3
7	21	M	Engineering Management	Hungary	Team 3
8	22	F	International Business	the Netherlands	Team 4
9	21	M	International Business	Turkey	Team 4
10	21	F	Business Management	Germany	Team 4
11	21	F	Economics and Entrepreneurship	Portugal	Team 4
12	29	F	International Management	Germany	Team 5
13	21	F	Economics and Green Management	Italy	Team 6
14	22	F	Economics and Green Management	Italy	Team 6
15	19	M	Public Relations and Marketing	Spain	Team 7
16	23	F	Business Administration	Austria	Team 7
17	20	F	Economics and Green Management	Italy	Team 8
18	21	M	Mechanical Engineering	the Netherlands	Team 8
19	22	M	Marketing Management	Finland	Team 8
20	25	M	International Business Management	the Netherlands	Team 9
21	22	F	B.A. Architecture	Mexico	Team 9
22	22	M	Business Administration	the Netherlands	Team 9
23	21	F	International Business	Bulgaria	Team 10
24	20	F	Business Administration	Hungary	Team 10
25	21	M	Business and Management	Italy	Team 11
26	21	F	Information Management	Portugal	Team 11
27	20	F	Business Administration and Finance	Ireland	Team 12
28	21	F	International Business	Spain	Team 12
29	21	F	Business Administration	the Netherlands	Team 12
30	21	M	Economics	Norway	Team 13
31	21	M	Economics	Italy	Team 14
32	24	F	International Management	Switzerland	Team 15
33	20	M	Business Administration	France	Team 15
34	20	M	Business Administration	Spain	Team 16
35	22	M	International Management	Germany	Team 14
36	21	F	Business Administration	Turkey	Team 14
37	21	F	Business Administration	the Netherlands	Team 13
38	21	M	Business Administration	Spain	Team 13
39	21	M	Business Administration	the Netherlands	Team 15
40	22	F	Business Administration	Turkey	Team 15
41	21	F	Public Relations and Marketing	Croatia	Team 16
42	20	F	Economics and Financial Management	Italy	Team 16
43	21	M	International Business	Bulgaria	Team 17
44	24	F	International Business	Yemen	Team 17

APPENDIX 2: Timeline international minor B L S

Timeline Business Leadership Sustainability

30 January – 6 June 2024

Week 1 and 2: Introduction, getting to know each other, first assignments

Carnival break: 12th to 16th February = no school activities

Week 3: Field school from Canada and **individual presentations Value Drivers** (20-23 Feb)

Week 4: First exercise/business task due, introduction of MOOCs

Week 5: Presentations **group project plans**

Week 9: **Mid-term group assignment evaluations**, SDG and Lund University MOOCs deadline

Week 12: **Assessments individual assignments (social enterprise-multiple value creation business model)**, deadline written report: 19 April

May holiday: 29th of April-5 May = no school activities

9th of May: Ascension Day – no school activities

Week 17: **Final group assignment presentations**, deadline written report: 31 May

Minor ends on Thursday, 6th of June

APPENDIX 3: Questionnaire Intercultural Expectations

Your interculturally-related expectations

Minor Business Leadership Sustainability, February 2023

Please, download this form, fill out the details as requested below, kindly answer the questions and upload the document to the appropriate folder in Teams **before the start of day three**.

Name:

Country:

Age:

Education:

Level of English: (according to you):

1. What expectations do you have regarding studying and working in multicultural teams?

2. What might be the pros and cons (arguments for and against) of working in multicultural teams?

3. How do you think the anticipated challenges could be addressed (overcome)?

4. What intercultural experiences (if any) have you been through before joining this minor? It could be a holiday abroad, friendship with a culturally-different person, etc. What was it like?

APPENDIX 4: Group Dynamics Questionnaire

BLS international minor: multi-cultural team Dynamics Questionnaire, 23 March 2023

to be filled out by project group

Name project: Project P.

List the nationalities in your team: Irish, Portuguese, Spanish, Hungarian, German and Dutch

1. **What are the challenges related to cultural differences in your team?** (concerning time, relationships with others, relation with rules/agreements, communication-expressing concerns, dealing with emotions)
 - The Dutch are direct compared to other nationalities.
 - Portuguese and Spanish have a more long-term orientation than other cultures in the team.

2. **How have you organised the work?** (behaviour = i.e. attending meetings, preparation, responding to messages, turn-taking, decision making etc.).
 - We have scheduled weekly group meetings on a Wednesday after class and client meetings every Thursday afternoon.
 - We also use our WhatsApp and teams group chats to communicate, and we all make sure to respond to messages and we use interactive tools such as polls to do this.
 - Regarding decision making, we all discuss the issue and then we have our appointed leader who makes the final decision.
 - In the beginning, we were struggling to organise and structure our project and stepping into our group roles. It took some time figuring out, also because we weren't provided with structure from the university or the client. Eventually, we took some time to step back and rethink our group process, roles, and overall structure. We then set up some rules and agreements, rediscussed our roles and responsibilities and established a new structure. This is what is working for us right now, and we are finally making progress.

3. **What is the role of motivation of team members? How do you deal with feedback on engagement?**

In terms of motivation, we all try to remain positive and if anyone has any apprehensions, we discuss them and raise them with the client if we believe it is necessary

4. **Can you give an example of disagreement? How did you deal with it?**

We haven't had any disagreements yet thankfully, but if it occurred, we would all try to mediate and diffuse the situation and make sure we communicate the different points of view in order to come to an agreement that we are all satisfied with.

5. What works well and what is still an issue and why?

- Our weekly progress meetings are very beneficial to keep us on schedule and to update each other on our progress and any queries we may have.
- The only we've had so far as a group is we've struggled to find a time that suits us all to meet in an informal setting.

APPENDIX 5: Interview questions

BLS Interview questions on team's cultural intelligence

Discussion on cultural diversity and how it affects team efficiency and team well-being

List of topics/questions discussed

- Differences in work norms and behavior
 - Different understanding of goals and rules
 - Role and task allocation
 - Decision-making
 - Conflict management
 - Language fluency
 - Ways of communicating: whether implicit or explicit
 - What facilitates social cohesiveness
 - Team member acceptance and integration (threshold at which an individual feels part of the team)
 - Task-orientation versus relationship-orientation
 - Perspectives of time and time management
 - Challenges, incidents, anecdotes
-
- How would you describe your team?
 - What cultural differences have you faced during your team activities? Difficulties, obstacles
 - How did you overcome the difficulties?
 - How have you organized your work? How are group decisions made?
 - What works well?
 - Do you feel everybody is participating equally? Elaborate
 - How about motivation? Is the common goal enough motivation to create a CQ team?
 - Situations, incidents, anecdotes where different culturally- determined approaches clashed?
 - What would be different if all team members belonged to the same culture?
 - What was the team's worst moment?
 - What was the team's moment of glory?
 - What role does the language play?
 - What would you need to become more efficient?
 - How have you experienced the Dutch culture?

APPENDIX 6: The Team Game

The Team Game

"*Het Team Spel*," translated as "The Team Game" is a serious game developed by Vincent van Reusel and Natasja Loomans. The game is designed to facilitate team building, collaboration, and communication within organizations.

The game is based on the concept of **team efficiency** by organizational development scientist Richard Beckhard (1918-1991).

Team definition: a group of people with a specific task/goal for which cooperation is necessary. There is **interdependency** between team members in order to achieve the goal.

The model GRPI (goals, roles, procedure, interaction) helps tackle team clarity and agreement.

Game can have several goals: 1. Getting to know each other 2. Gain insight in strengths and weaknesses 3. Discover why things are not progressing as they should 4. Resolve a conflict

Goal of our intervention: 1,2,3.

Needed: post-its, pens, flipchart, colors

Each round 15-20 minutes, 4 rounds and a feedback round; (one team member) the coach observes the others and gives feedback

Follow-up discussion: what was striking?

1. What can be concluded about our team?
2. What was the most remarkable insight?
3. How much agreement is there about roles, goals, procedures?
4. Which issues need to be addressed?

Coaches: look for the so called "**pearls of wisdom**"= a wise word or statement that touches the core of the issue at stake or describes poignantly what is going on...

The Team Game

We will play four rounds of about 15/20 minutes.

First Round: Mission and Goals

1. Explain the goal of your project to: a) the board of directors b) guests at a birthday party, c) a group of 4-year-old children
2. Imagine your team has been nominated for the “Sustainability Champions” prize. What should be the prize and why?
3. Choose between the following assignments:
 - a. Which fairy tale fits best with your team and why?
 - b. Each member finds an object that symbolizes the mission of the team and explains
 - c. Choose a hero or a famous person as your patron. Why this one?
 - d. What is the contribution of your project/teamwork to the wider world? What makes it meaningful?
4. Each team member writes down what is the main goal of the team. When all are written, share the answers and discuss the differences.
5. Agree on: when is the project accomplished? What do you wish to hear from your stakeholders? How would you like to feel about it?

Second round: Tasks and Roles

1. Each team members explains which experience (from personal life or hobby) can be used for his/her tasks in the team
2. Draw a human body and place inside it the individual team members as limbs or organs. How healthy is your team?
3. Each team member shares what they expect from the other team members=write it on the flipchart. Discuss if there is consensus about these expectations
4. Take turns in putting post-its on the back of a team member with the role that best suits him/her:
 - a. Thinker
 - b. Feeler
 - c. Wisher = the one who wants
 - d. DoerThe person needs to guess what is said
5. Which task/role could be rotated (take turns) and what would be the benefit of it?

Bonus questions: If you had a Superman/superwoman at your disposal, which tasks should he/she do and why?

Third round: Procedures and Work Agreements

1. Looking back at your previous teamwork experience: which was the best one? What were the rules of team cooperation? Which rules would you suggest for this team?
2. Discuss decision making in your team. Think of a decision made by:
 - a. The (informal) leader without consulting the group'
 - b. Consensus: everyone on board

- c. Majority vote
 - d. Expert in the matter decides
 - e. Other stakeholders outside you influence decide
- 3. How do you deal with
 - a. Late comers to team meetings
 - b. Members who do not deliver on time and/or do not notify the team about the expected delay?
- 4. Which procedure in your team is the most challenging? How could you solve it? What would help?

Round Four: Interpersonal Relationships

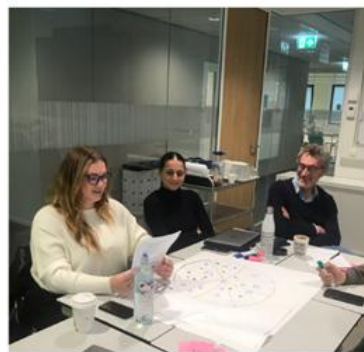
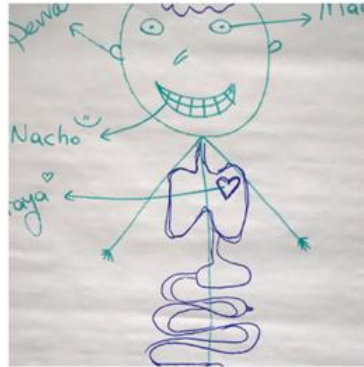
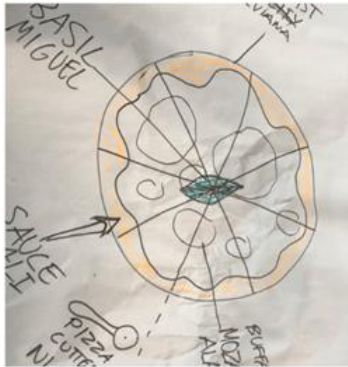
- 1. Draw a pizza with the personal qualities/strengths of the team members (cheese, peppers, oregano,...) What is the top quality of your team? What could be the drawback of this quality? What does the team miss?
- 2. Write a poem or short story where all the team members are included.
- 3. Work in pairs: stand/sit opposite each other and observe each other for 2 minutes without speaking. When done share what you see about the other person.

Feedback session facilitators

- 1. Is each member's contribution heard and acknowledged?
- 2. Who is more and who is less prominently present? Why is that?
- 3. Who speaks a lot and who too little?
- 4. Do you see patterns in the way members react to each other?

Follow-up team discussion: what was striking?

- 1. What can be concluded about our team?
- 2. What was the most remarkable insight?
- 3. How much agreement is there about roles, goals, procedures?
- 4. Which issues need to be addressed?



APPENDIX 7: Dilemmas for Discussion

Discuss how you would act as a team in the following situations:

1. A team member from abroad is eager to visit places of interest, not only in the Netherlands but also in other European countries. Due to his/her extensive travel, it has been challenging to meet and discuss team issues, often resulting in resolving team matters in his/her absence. Now, with only two weeks remaining before the final deadline, the report needs to be finalized. More than 60 pages of work need to be collated and harmonized, and decisions must be made about what content to keep or discard. Although the team member has consistently submitted their work on time, he/she plans a trip to Venice over the weekend, which coincides with the team's scheduled meeting to finalize the report. You need everyone's involvement. What do you do?
2. An introverted and shy team member submits his/her portion of the first assignment, but the quality is below standard. The content is poorly written in terms of English and seems to be a simple copy-and-paste job. Knowing that this team member comes from a culture that doesn't favor direct criticism and may find it hurtful, how do you handle the situation?
3. A team member cancels a meeting at the last minute, while another says they'll arrive shortly but joins two hours later. The rest of the team is left to do the work and make decisions without them. These same team members often arrive 15–30 minutes late to meetings. What steps do you take to address this?
4. There is a disagreement about a crucial decision, with differing opinions on how to proceed. How do you work toward finding common ground and agreeing on a solution?
5. After several weeks of collaboration, it becomes apparent that a team member is disengaged and not participating. This person also seems to be dealing with personal issues and has obligations at their home university, which requires them to fly back for some time. How do you address this situation?

APPENDIX 8: Example Team Intercultural Agreement

Project group: Project C - Change Management

Date: 26.10.2023

GOALS: What are our team goals for this project? What do we want to accomplish? What skills do we want to develop or refine?
- Complete the team task in the best possible way, ensuring quality and efficiency in work. - We want to improve our presentation skills. - Prepare ourselves for corporate life. - Evolve in a multicultural environment surrounded by a group of people who come from 5 different regions and areas in the world.
EXPECTATIONS: What do we expect of one another in regard to attendance at meetings, participation, frequency of communication, the quality of work, etc.?
We expect every team member's active participation in team meetings, making presentations, online meetings with Canon and also doing the tasks that we have. If a team member is not able to attend, she/he should inform the other members as soon as possible.
POLICIES & PROCEDURES: What rules can we agree on to help us meet our goals and expectations? Be very specific and concrete.
- Be committed to the team, which means taking meetings seriously - Regular Meetings: We will establish regularly scheduled meetings (every week) to discuss progress. - Thoughts shouldn't be just said, also written down

CONSEQUENCES: How will we address non-performance in regard to these goals, expectations, policies and procedures?
- Ask questions about the reason, maybe we can help each other - Trying to solve it together by discussing the root causes and maybe find another of doing. -

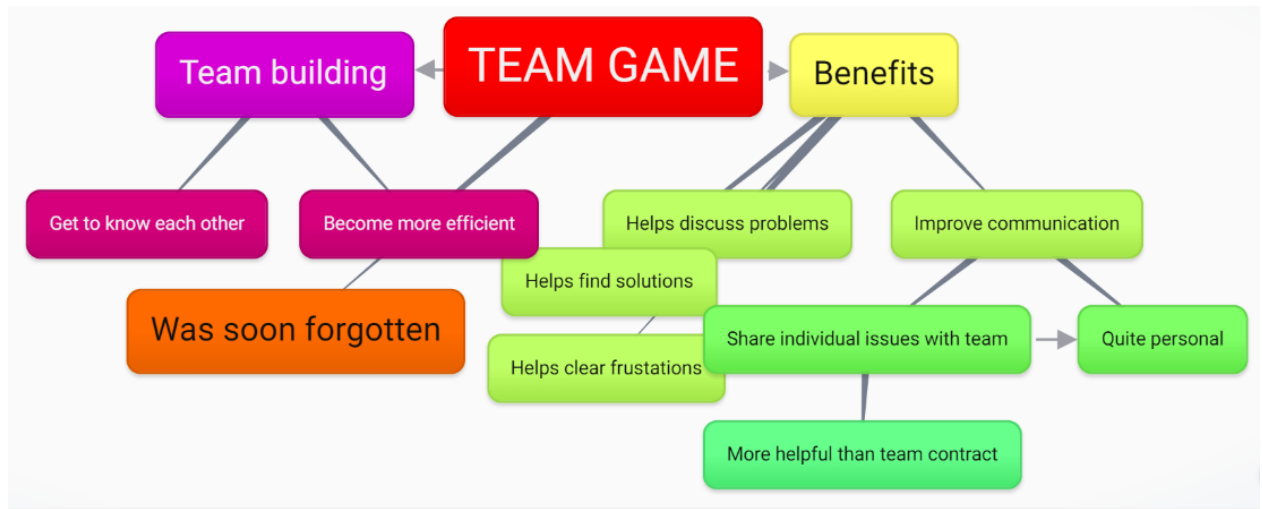
We share these goals and expectations, and agree to these policies, procedures, and consequences.

Signatures ...

APPENDIX 9: Example Evaluation Method “Glad, Sad, Mad”



APPENDIX 10: Mind Map Team Game



APPENDIX 11: Mind Map Team Intercultural Agreement

