

GlobalViews Cards: Taking a Global View of Cultural Values

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“Culture hides more than it reveals, and strangely enough, what it hides, it hides most effectively from its own participants. Years of study have convinced me that the real job is not to understand foreign culture but to understand our own.” — Edward T. Hall

Introduction

Leadership and organisational culture remain a key focus in business articles and conferences, and LinkedIn articles today. While much attention is given to organisational culture, culture's complexity reveals that there are other dimensions of culture that are also present in today's organisations. Today's organisations are becoming more diverse, and this is increasing in complexity. Beneath the visible dimensions of diversity, such as gender, ethnicity, nationality and age, lies a hidden diversity code that requires us to delve deeper to discover and understand. These hidden cultural values, cultural beliefs and cultural worldviews influence what we value and how we see the world and influence how we behave. It is shaped by a lifetime of influences from our upbringing, environments, background and lived experiences. Geert Hofstede calls this the “software of the mind” that describes the different ways of working that he noticed in organisations. Historically, the different diversity dimensions described common values and worldviews. However, this is no longer the case with globalisation and the dynamic nature of culture. Visible identity and deep values are increasingly divergent, and demographic assumptions are no longer common patterns to how someone thinks, leads or makes sense of their world.

Where this becomes tricky is when diverse groups come together in teams, organisations and communities. Assumptions of stereotypes can lead to misunderstanding and breakdown of trust that will result in conflict. Understanding diversity without intercultural understanding and agility won't unlock the creativity, innovation, and productivity for the organisation and inclusion, engagement and belonging for the workforce that many organisations are pursuing.

This requires everyone to develop a curiosity about the many hidden cultural values and cultural worldviews at play, and language to understand how different behaviours show up in multicultural teams and organisations. GlobalViews builds on decades of culture theory to help leaders and teams discover some of the common cultural values that shape decisions, team interaction and conversations. It serves to surface some awareness and understanding of the different values we have, so that we might learn to navigate the commonality and different perspectives in our conversations and interactions. It helps us to see some of the different “patterns” that shape us.

In many a team meeting in a large organisation today, you are likely to encounter a room full of diverse people. The hidden diversity is the patterns of behaviour that they have learned from their families, their educational background, their communities, their countries, and lived experiences that may have different perspectives on the same fundamental questions. Who should speak first? When does silence mean agreement? What does authority look like? What makes a decision legitimate? How much should work ask of the whole person? Who earns the right to lead? These underlying values are not personality differences, but they are deeply held cultural values that structure every human interaction at work. And because they are invisible, they are rarely named. Instead, under stress and pressure, and the lack of deep understanding, they have the potential to cause frustration, misunderstanding, and the quiet exclusion of people in teams and organisations. This paper provides the theoretical foundations of how GlobalViews was developed and gives insights into one facet of cultural diversity.

The Research Behind GlobalViews

GlobalViews is grounded in six decades of cross-cultural research. Four bodies of work form its foundation. These are the widely recognised and applied in cross-cultural management and intercultural management contexts. Cultural values shape how people relate to authority, how they express disagreement, how they understand loyalty, how they view the different gender roles, how they judge fairness, and what kind of leadership feels legitimate to them (Hofstede, 1984; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2000; Dorfman et al., 2012). These differences go beyond nationality and ethnicity. Gender, generation, professional background, and lived experience shape the values a person brings to work. Leading and managing a diverse organisation today without a growing awareness of the influence of these values can result in a superficial and somewhat tokenistic understanding that is a missed opportunity to build trust.

These cultural values form a comprehensive map of some of the cultural dimensions that matter most for how people work together.

Research Foundations

Hofstede: Culture as Collective Programming

Geert Hofstede's research began with his landmark study of IBM employees across more than 50 countries. This work identified that culture is not a preference or a style. It is the collective programming of different groups that influences their behaviour. Hofstede identified six dimensions along which national cultures consistently differ: how power and authority are distributed and accepted (Power Distance); whether individuals see themselves primarily as part of a group or as autonomous agents (Individualism vs. Collectivism); how much ambiguity and uncertainty people can tolerate (Uncertainty Avoidance); whether achievement and competition are valued over care and quality of life (Masculinity vs. Femininity); whether people plan for the long term or focus on the present (Long-term Orientation); and how much cultures permit themselves enjoyment (Indulgence vs. Restraint). His central contribution to the GlobalViews framework is the insistence that these differences are not about individual character; they are about culture of specific groups. It's invisible and requires enquiry to uncover the different dimensions that each individual holds.

Trompenaars: From Description to Dialogue

Fons Trompenaars' research moved the cross-cultural conversation from description to dynamic. His seven dimensions of cultural difference provided other dimensions beyond Hofstede. These values, universalism vs. particularism, individualism vs. collectivism, neutral vs. affective, specific vs. diffuse, achievement vs. ascription, sequential vs. synchronic time, and internal vs. external control, are different cultural values that describe difference.

His most important contribution to the GlobalViews framework is the reframe it enables: most intercultural friction is not caused by wrong values. It is caused by two legitimate values in genuine tension. Rules versus relationships. Individual accountability versus group harmony. Earned status versus given status. When leaders understand this, the response to difference shifts from judgement to curiosity — from 'they're doing it wrong' to 'what are they prioritising, and why?' This is the move the GlobalViews cards are designed to practice

Hall: The Meaning Between the Words

Edward Hall identified a dimension of cultural difference that the other frameworks largely miss: the channel through which meaning travels. In high-context cultures, most of what matters is communicated through relationship, history, tone, and silence. Words carry a fraction of the meaning. In low-context cultures, meaning is explicit. If it isn't said, it doesn't count. This distinction explains a category of intercultural misunderstanding that is otherwise almost impossible to name. Two people can be fluent in the same language, share the same meeting, and leave having understood something entirely different — because one was listening to the words and the other was listening to everything around the words.

Hall’s contribution to the GlobalViews framework is its communication dimension: who says what, how, when, and with what silence in between carries profound cultural meaning that organisations routinely fail to notice.

GLOBE: Leadership Is Never Culturally Neutral

The GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organisational Behaviour Effectiveness) study with 170 researchers, 62 societies, and decades of empirical data — asked the question: how does culture shape what people expect from their leaders?

The answer was unambiguous and, for many Western-trained leaders, confronting. The same leadership behaviours are read as strengths in some cultures and as failures in others. Directness. Humility. Individual recognition. Collaborative decision-making. Every one of these is culturally valued and culturally contested. The GLOBE study identified nine dimensions of this variation (see Table 1 below). Its central conclusion provides the core rationale for the GLOBE project: there is no culturally neutral leadership style. If you lead the same way with everyone, you are not leading inclusively — you are leading from your own cultural default. GlobalViews introduces some of these cultural dimensions, as it is the most recent and comprehensive body of research that makes different cultural values visible.

The Ten Dimensions of GlobalViews

These four bodies of research map the cultural territory for how people work together in today’s globalised world. GlobalViews uses ten of the more common hidden dimensions as its theoretical foundation as a starting point. Other aspects complement these dimensions but have not been included. Each card in the deck is built around one of these dimensions.

DIMENSION	THE QUESTION IT SURFACES	SOURCE
Power distance	How is authority experienced — and who gets to challenge it?	Hofstede · GLOBE
Humane orientation	How much do care, compassion and integrity shape decisions?	GLOBE
Assertiveness	Is directness valued, or does silence carry more meaning than words?	GLOBE

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Humane orientation	How much do care, compassion and integrity shape decisions?	GLOBE
Assertiveness	Is directness valued, or does silence carry more meaning than words?	GLOBE
Performance orientation	Is success defined by outcomes, intentions, or impact on others?	GLOBE
In-group collectivism	Where does loyalty live — in relationships, rules, or role?	GLOBE
Institutional collectivism	How are individual and organisational needs traded off?	GLOBE
Uncertainty avoidance	What counts as acceptable risk — and who decides?	Hofstede · GLOBE
Gender egalitarianism	Who is seen as a natural leader, and what assumptions sit beneath that?	GLOBE
Achievement vs ascription	Is status earned through performance or granted through identity?	Trompenaars
Communication style	How much meaning travels in words versus context, tone, and silence?	Hall · Trompenaars

The four frameworks above bring together decades of culture and organisation research that has often remained siloed in the international business, international education and cross-cultural management disciplines. They have not been integrated into organisational, leadership and management theory, though Erin Meyer with the Culture Map, David Livermore with cultural intelligence, has introduced it. Together, these four frameworks integrate and synthesise mapping of cultural differences in the organisational literature. And yet they share a limitation that has significantly constrained their practical impact. They describe culture at the level of national averages. They tell you that, on average, Japan scores higher on power distance than Australia — but they cannot tell you what is happening in your team, with this leader, in today's conversation. They are diagnostic at the macro level, where they can explain the different patterns of behaviour in each of the dimensions. They are not designed to address and generate conversation that surfaces cultural values at the individual and organisational level of the specific relationships that matter.

GlobalViews is designed to surface some of these hidden cultural values through dialogue in teams and in leaders to grow their awareness of these cultural patterns. They take elements of six decades of cross-cultural research and give it a conversational structure that generates insight at the level where it matters most: to the person who is navigating how to understand what happened in their team and organisation.

Introducing GlobalViews

GlobalViews are dual-Lens discovery cards built on three interconnected design principles, each grounded in the theories described above, designed to explore some of the hidden cultural values.

Principle 1: Deep Values, Not Surface Demographics

The most consequential differences between people at work are not visible. Gender, ethnicity, age, and nationality are real dimensions of identity — but they are poor proxies for the values, worldviews, and assumptions that actually govern how people lead, follow, collaborate, and make meaning together (Harrison et al., 2002).

The cards engage directly with some of the deep-level cultural characteristics: how power should flow, what loyalty requires, how risk should be held, what fairness demands, who belongs, and what good leadership looks, sounds, and feels like that have been shaped by a person's cultural background. These are the dimensions that national culture research has mapped. However, globalisation has meant these cultural values are crossing borders with workers, international students, migrants and refugees and social media bringing values to their new workplaces, communities and homes.

This is especially critical in today's workforce, where visible identity and deep-level values increasingly diverge. Different generations, migrants, third-culture individuals, and those with multicultural heritage may carry values shaped by multiple cultural contexts simultaneously, making demographic assumptions not just inadequate but actively misleading. These cards assume nothing about where someone is from. They ask directly about what someone values and believes.

Principle 2: The Dual-Lens Structure

Every card has two sides. This is designed to support the Global Leadership Associates framework of the three views – the first person, the second and the third person. By design, the second-person view is surfaced in the dialogue that is shared in the conversation.

SIDE A — FIRST PERSON	SIDE B — THIRD PERSON
Asks how the individual personally experiences the dimension. It surfaces their own values and assumptions — what feels normal, right, or obvious to them. There are no right answers. There is only honest reflection. “How do you experience speaking up to someone more senior?”	Asks what actually happens in the team or organisation. It shifts from personal belief to systemic reality — from what I value to what the organisation rewards, tolerates, and makes invisible. “What usually happens when someone challenges a senior leader here?”

The gap between a person’s Side A and Side B answers is where the most important work happens. It reveals the possible distance between personal values and organisational culture, the point at which people are routinely asked to act against their own values to function within the system. This gap is not a failure to be fixed. It is data that enables further inquiry.

Principle 3: Three Levels of Depth

The cards are structured to allow conversations to develop progressively, from accessible surface questions to worldview-level inquiry to systemic reflection. This sequencing reflects the research finding that psychological safety must precede depth: people cannot engage honestly with invisible values if the environment does not first demonstrate that difference will be met with curiosity rather than judgment. However, in the context of dialogue, this is made possible.

The GlobalViews cards are designed for three contexts, each addressing a different scale of the same fundamental challenge.

In Individual Coaching

Side A includes questions on how a leader personally navigates the cultural values in question. They generate self-awareness of the invisible assumptions that may or may not be known. In coaching, this gives different cultural insights into different patterns of values and behaviour.

In Team Development

The dual-lens creates a gap between what individuals value and what the team culture rewards. This gap is almost always the source of the persistent friction, disengagement, and unequal participation that diverse teams experience and may not get surfaced because it lives below the level of policy, behaviour, or personality. The cards provide the opportunity for discovery.

In Organisational Assessment

Side B questions, used systematically across a leadership team, surface the degree to which the organisation's culture reflects or contradicts the values of its diverse workforce. This provides the opportunity to identify different cultural values that may not have been considered in any values work. The understanding of these values can develop cultural inclusion in the organisational system.

Conclusion

Alongside the other aspects of culture, the global dimensions of culture provide a more nuanced and complex view of culture. GlobalViews is a resource that invites dialogue and conversation to make the invisible dimensions of cultural values and worldviews visible. This turns assumptions and stereotypes into meaningful interaction that can generate curiosity and insight about how the people in this conversation see the world. It equips everyone to deepen their awareness and understanding of these hidden codes so that they can develop the agility to navigate and hold these diverse values together. With understanding, everyone has the potential to adapt to create a "third culture space". The third culture space is where everyone is able to recognise and value these hidden codes in order to create space for their contribution to the relationships, teams and organisations to flourish together.

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