

What exactly is a Culture of One?



And why are so many people trying to learn more about it?

With a secret inner smile and feeling of peace through self-interaction, as well as extended interaction with the many others who populate our lives, happiness emerges. I'll do my best to explain.

My name is Terry Jones. This idea of a "Culture of One" spawned from my work life as somewhat of a lost soul, in search of a space that would provide me the freedom to just "be me." This space might also enable me interaction with new & interesting people, or a potential opportunity to discover aspects about myself that might open the skies of personal fulfillment.

I had recently returned from a year of studying abroad. Languages and psychology — as well as my personal experiences during that year — allowed two freedoms I otherwise may never have been afforded in order to integrate into the person I was meant to be during my lifetime.

The first (and most intense) freedom was my full immersion into a lifestyle perspective that was so very different from what I was accustomed to — particularly, the native language spoken abroad. Not only did I learn to speak modern day German, but I also studied the evolution of its ancient expressions & phrases. As a result, I gained an enormous appreciation for how language itself reveals the way people of those times viewed and valued the surrounding world. I found this topic fascinating, and it created a hunger within me to learn even more about how different cultures perceive themselves and others.

The second freedom earned from my time abroad was a release from the boundaries and restrictions of a role within my native family that was unduly stressful, and often painful, stemming from the premature death of my father. With his loss, my family culture assigned me two separate roles: 1) a surrogate father figure to two younger brothers and 2) an emotional caregiver to an ailing mother. While studying abroad, I experienced a sense of self-discovery and expression not previously enjoyed. For the first time in my life, I felt "free" from the weight of those family burdens.

Upon my return to the States, the previous cultural roles of my immediate family were re-established. However, this time, I had a fresh set of eyes about who I was and who I was to become. To the surprise of some, and near disbelief of others, I regard the challenges so apparent in my personal history as genuine gifts from Providence. Thus, I owe them my utmost gratitude for allowing me an early opportunity to accept life on its own terms.

Moreover I feel blessed with a drive to face the world head-on, victim-less and well-rehearsed about constructing an inner "infrastructure" to assume the sole responsibility for the manner in which I negotiate co-existence of sadness & joy. A drive to continue exercising my internal locus of control that allows me to sustain a perspective of goodness, peace, purpose and happiness.

The term "culture" is the very bedrock of human experience, applying to any group of people who create and share a set of agreements about a world view. Every "culture" agrees upon a set of norms meant to ensure the ongoing survival of all participants who choose to remain active and productive members of that group. These norms include

both rewards for individual compliance and sanctions for those choosing to behave in a way that deviates from what that “culture” finds acceptable. The rewards for conforming are powerful and range from the satisfaction of our human need to “belong” to increasing levels of prestige amongst peers. The sanctions for straying from cultural norms are equally powerful and range from punishment to excommunication from the group.

Culture of One is a microcosm of that experience I was afforded during my time abroad — a fresh approach to self-empowerment that integrates root identifiers from anthropological, sociological, psychological, philosophical, and theological lenses.

While pursuit of any one of these separate (yet overlapping) disciplines may carve out a clearer path to personal “truth,” when studied together, it is precisely those overlapping dimensions that empower us to discover a singular meaning and purpose in life that belongs to us, and only us. That singular meaning and purpose holds us accountable each and every moment of our lifetime.



Terry Jones, Ph.D, Director of Programs

Terry Jones, Ph.D, is a renowned author and educator with almost forty years of experience in academic management & administration. With an extensive higher education background in both public and private school settings, Jones’ core specialties span across anthropological, sociological, psychological, philosophical and theological disciplines. He received a Master of Arts degree in Educational Administration from St. Mary’s College in 1982 and a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Educational Leadership from Gonzaga University in 1992. Jones is a world traveling connoisseur who resides in Sonoma, California, with his dog Snuffy.