Multicultural Toolkit
(Toolkit for Cross-Cultural Collaboration)

Executive Summary

The Toolkit for Cross-Cultural Collaboration was created as a result of a study of collaboration styles of African American, Asian American, Native American, Hispanic American, and Anglo American communities. While some similarities in styles were found across communities, a great chasm separated each minority community from the European American Communities. The chasm was created by differences in expectations, styles, assumptions, values, body language, and privilege. Each minority community understands that great differences separate them from the European American mainstream cultures. In contrast, European American communities do not have much awareness of the magnitude of differences. Occasional events open a small portal to this awareness, but European Americans do not experience cultural differences as a central concern in their lives. For minority communities, the differences are not only central, but vast and inescapable.

The consequences of gaps in collaboration and communication styles are devastating to each minority community and to the nation as a whole. For minority communities, some consequences are that health services are underutilized and many children do not complete their education. The resulting economic disadvantages are passed from generation to generation.

The Toolkit discusses barriers to cross-cultural collaboration and provides methods for assessing and improving communication patterns and cultural competence on an organizational basis and on an individual basis. By improving cultural competence, trust and mutual respect can be improved between agencies and minority communities, forming a solid foundation for cross-cultural collaboration.

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Candia Elliott, Diversity Training Associates
R. Jerry Adams, Ph.D., Evaluation and Development Institute
Suganya Sockalingam, Ph.D., Office of Multicultural Health, Department of Human Resources, Oregon
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Introduction

The Toolkit for Cross-Cultural Collaboration was created as a result of a study of collaboration styles of African American, Asian American, Native American, Hispanic American, and Anglo American communities. While some similarities were found across communities in styles and markers of success, a great chasm separated each minority community from the Anglo American Communities. The chasm was created by differences in expectations, styles, assumptions, values, body language, and privilege. Each minority community understands that great differences separate them from the Anglo American mainstream cultures. In contrast, Anglo American communities do not have much awareness of the magnitude of differences. Occasional events open a small portal to this awareness, but Anglo Americans do not experience cultural differences as a central concern in their lives. For minority communities, the differences are not only central, but vast and inescapable.

The consequences of gaps in collaboration and communication styles are devastating to each minority community and to the nation as a whole. For minority communities, some consequences are: health services are underutilized, and many children do not complete their education. The resulting economic disadvantages are passed from generation to generation.

Following are examples of differential at-risk behaviors and outcomes for ethnic minorities, from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site (1998, 1999) and the Department of Health and Human Services Public Health Services Web site (1998, 1999):

**Asian American and Pacific Islanders:** The number of Hepatitis B cases among Asian American and Pacific Islander (API) children is two to three times greater than the rates for all children in the United States; tuberculosis rates for APIs is five times higher than the rates for the total population; 36 percent under the age of 65 have no health insurance; and for Southeast Asian men, smoking prevalence is 34% to 43% compared to 27.6% for Anglo American men (Department of Health & Human Services, Public Health Service (1998).

**Hispanic Americans:** Tuberculosis prevalence is twice the rate for the total population; Hispanic Americans are almost twice as likely to have diabetes as Anglo Americans; and among Hispanic American youth ages 15-24, homicide was the leading cause of death (Department of Health & Human Services, Public Health Service, 1999).

**African Americans:** Through 1997, over one third (36%) of AIDS cases were among African Americans, who represent only 13% of the U.S. population; 60% of all women reported with AIDS in 1997 were African American; 62 percent of all reported pediatric cases for 1997 were African American; 63 percent of HIV diagnoses for young people ages 13 to 24 were among African Americans; African Americans are 1.7 times as likely to have diabetes as Anglo Americans; over 20 percent of poor African American children have high blood lead levels compared to 8 percent of poor Anglo Americans; African American children have twice the infant mortality rate of Anglo American children and four times the rate for causes related to low birthweight; and among African American youth ages 15-24, homicide was the leading cause of death (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (1999).

**Native Americans:** Diabetes prevalence is 70 per 1,000 compared to 30 per 1,000 for the total population and cirrhosis deaths are 21.6 per 1,000 compared to 8 per 1,000 for the total population; the rate for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome is 2.5 times higher than for Anglo American infants (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1999).

What is the cost of failing to prevent at-risk behaviors or reduce poor health outcomes through collaboration with ethnic minority communities? Diabetes alone was estimated to cost $98 billion in direct and indirect health care costs for 1997 for the total population (Centers for Disease Control and
Prevention, 1998). If the rate of diabetes for ethnic minorities matched Anglo American rates, billions would be saved each year in health care costs.

In terms of human suffering:

- Risk of stroke is 2 to 4 times higher in people with diabetes
- Sixty to sixty-five percent of people with diabetes have high blood pressure
- Diabetes is the leading cause of blindness in adults 20 to 74 years old
- Heart disease death rates are 2 to 4 times higher for persons with diabetes
- Diabetes is the leading cause of end-stage renal disease (dialysis, kidney transplants)
- Sixty to seventy percent of people with diabetes have mild to severe forms of nervous system damage
- More than half of lower limb amputations occur among persons with diabetes

**Starting the Collaboration Process**

This toolkit brings a new set of perspectives to the study and practice of collaboration between and across ethnic groups. A similar perspective has not yet been found in the collaboration literature, especially in cross-cultural collaboration. Studies in the past have been built primarily upon the disciplines of speech communication, sociology, anthropology, and psychology. What the authors bring to this study is the perspective of intercultural communication, and methods to evaluate the effectiveness of programs. This process can lead to improved communication and collaboration between agencies and ethnic minority groups.

While persons in minority communities know that differences separate them from the Anglo American communities, they do not understand the exact nature of the differences in communication styles and values. Instead of understanding these differences, persons from minority communities perceive that they are treated disrespectfully. (Sometimes they are, by individuals displaying prejudice). Because of behaviors they experience as disrespectful from the Anglo American communities, minorities often withdraw from participation in services designed on an Anglo American model. Cross-cultural collaboration to improve services for members of other cultures then becomes very difficult.

Some members of minority communities move away from their own traditions and adopt the values and styles of the mainstream or Anglo American community; such individuals may have frequent communication gaps when dealing with both traditional and mainstream communities. They may find they are not trusted within their own minority communities and they are not fully accepted within the mainstream community. Since they usually work and associate with Anglo Americans, such individuals are more accessible to mainstream organizations and are most often asked by mainstream agencies to represent minority communities. This further expands the gap in communication.

**Minority communities perceive it as an act of disrespect when a mainstream agency appoints someone to “represent their interests.” Instead, communities believe that they should choose their own representatives.**

In these circumstances Anglo Americans are frustrated because they have chosen persons of high visibility—to them—from minority communities in an attempt to bridge gaps and increase involvement of the community. They then find that participation or service utilization from those minority communities is still lacking, even after the agency’s good-faith (but uninformed) effort to correct the situation.

If persons from a minority background have high visibility within the Anglo American community, such as administrators within mainstream organizations, it does not mean that they also have high credibility or
visibility within a minority community. Their adoption of values and styles of the Anglo American community may have simultaneously discredited them within their communities of origin. Persons who have high visibility within the Anglo American communities are usually not the best people to choose as representatives for minority communities.

The best choices for representatives for minority communities are found by asking those who actively serve within those communities. For example, leaders within the African American communities may be found by contacting leaders of some of the larger churches serving primarily African Americans. Leaders of Native American communities may be found through contacting members of the tribal governments, who can consult with traditional leaders. For Asian Americans, contact the faith communities serving primarily Asian Americans; also, contact neighborhood associations where Asian Americans predominate. For Hispanic Americans, contact the faith communities and the Hispanic advocacy groups.

Each of the above organizations may help identify the most respected leaders within the communities they serve. Such respected persons, however, may not be particularly effective, or interested in communicating with, the Anglo American communities. The community leaders may have had a history of frustration and perceived or actual disrespect.

Finding respected minority community leaders to represent a community is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for effective cross-cultural collaboration. A person with training in bicultural competence may also be necessary to bridge communication gaps before and during the collaboration process. Having a respected representative and a culturally competent facilitator are two necessary elements for effective cross-cultural collaboration. For long term success, however, much more is needed.

The Cross-Cultural Collaboration Toolkit identifies areas of miscommunication that defeat attempts at cross-cultural collaboration. The Toolkit is designed to help administrators and community leaders become more culturally aware and therefore more effective at collaborating successfully.

Issues underlying the gaps in cross-cultural collaboration, however, are deep, systemic, and even global. A toolkit cannot, of course, solve the problems alone. Training to increase cultural competence must be incorporated into our national and local infrastructures. We need to work with schools and media, as well as politicians and administrators. Our current and future leaders need specific training to increase their cultural competence.

The problem of insufficient cultural competence for cross-cultural collaboration goes back to the earliest beginnings of humanity. Every human culture teaches its members to value their beliefs, mores, and views of reality as the best, as the ideal; in some cases, cultures teach that their beliefs are the ONLY acceptable way to be or think. The resulting lack of cultural interchange and adaptation is pervasive and severe. However, given the wide diversity present in modern societies, cultural competence is a necessary skill, allowing us to provide appropriate services to all citizens. Given our modern technologies, it is also a skill we need for global survival.

**Bias in Terminology**

It is difficult to discuss issues of diversity or multiculturalism. Many of the words related to this issue have unintended connotations, leading to inaccurate communication and the furthering of unintended biases. Finding an appropriate term for the non-minority population is especially challenging.

"Whites" is the official term used by the federal government. However, referring to a group based on skin color rather than ethnic affiliation is not supportable on the basis of biology, anthropology, or any science. As Jared Diamond points out in *Race Without Color*:
...it's easy then to distinguish almost any native European from any native sub-Saharan African; we recognize Europeans and sub-Saharan Africans as distinct races, which we name for their skin colors: whites and blacks, respectively. What could be more objective? As it turns out, this seemingly unassailable reasoning is not objective.

For example, "...races defined by body chemistry don't match races defined by skin color." Based on biological systems of classification, "...many anthropologists today conclude that one cannot recognize any human races at all."

If "race" is based on DNA rather than body chemistry, another conclusion is reached. "If so, the primary races of humanity may consist of several African races, plus one race to encompass all peoples of all other continents."

If we were just arguing about races of nonhuman animals, essentially the same uncertainties of classification would arise. But the debates would remain polite and would never attract attention outside the halls of academia.

Classification of humans is different 'only' in that it shapes our views of other peoples, fosters our subconscious differentiation between 'us' and 'them,' and is invoked to justify political and socioeconomic discrimination. On this basis, many anthropologists therefore argue that even if one could validly classify humans into "races", one should not.

Diamond concludes with "The last thing we need now is to continue codifying all those different appearances into an arbitrary system of racial classification." (Diamond, J. 1994, p. 1).

"White" also seems to mean "normative" or "non-minority." Why? If one examines recent federal reports from many of the most authoritative sources, such as the Centers for Disease Control, one finds that each "minority" group is identified in terms of ethnicity; the majority group, in contrast, is identified by skin color.

If one views "whites" as one more ethnic group, instead of the "normative" group, then the proper term would be "Anglo American" or "European American." One therefore has to ask, "Do key policy makers not recognize that Anglo Americans are also an ethnic group, not just the normative group for the culture?"

Why would one group be identified by skin color and every other group in terms of ethnicity or geographic origin?

If the ethnicity and geographic origins of Anglo Americans are unnoticed, taken for granted, and invisible, then we can understand why an older term, referring solely to skin color, has been maintained. Unfortunately, this practice only serves to maintain a lack of cultural awareness.

A noted national expert on multicultural communication, Carlos Cortes, asked a number of experienced trainers in multicultural communication to divide themselves into groups by ethnicity. The "white" participants (other than those who were Jewish) said they did not know where to go because they weren't really a part of any ethnic group. Dr. Cortes says this is what happens every time he requests a group to divide itself this way (Cortes, C., 1997).
Anglo Americans rarely understand that they also are an ethnic-cultural group.

Cortes also pointed out that this phenomenon is one of the central barriers to intercultural communication in the U.S. If a group does not understand that it is an ethnic group, what is their alternative concept of themselves? Do they unconsciously consider themselves the "human norm" group, in contrast to others, who are "culturally different?"

Skin color is not a useful classification. It does not predict behaviors or values. In contrast, knowing a person's ethnicity can help improve communication, the foundation for effective collaboration.

A compelling argument against the use of "white" to describe the majority in the United States is from the pioneering study of A. G. Greenwald and M. R. Banaji (1995) in which an assessment was made of the terms "white" and "black" in reference to people. They found strong bias associating the term "white" with what is desirable and good in people (by persons who consider themselves "white") compared to bias against the word "black." For a personal experience with bias, the reader can take this assessment online. It is available at [http://www.tolerance.org/hidden_bias/02.html](http://www.tolerance.org/hidden_bias/02.html)

For more information on why skin color or race should not be used as a way of defining groups, see Geometer of Race (Gould, 1994), which provides a history of the development of our current classification system for human races.

Given all the reasons mentioned above, the authors therefore prefer the ethnic term "Anglo Americans" or "European Americans" to refer to the majority population. The term "Anglo Americans" is commonly used and understood as referring to persons who are not ethnic minorities. However, it literally refers to people of English origin or descent, so it is not inclusive. The term "European American" is preferred by many specialists in multicultural communication, but is not yet common in everyday language. It is not even included in Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (1993). In addition, "European American" can also refer to citizens who are immigrants, such as those who have recently arrived from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

The term "Anglo American" was also chosen to help clarify the invisible privilege associated with this ethnic group in comparison to others. We found that this invisible privilege, and an associated lack of cultural awareness, is a central barrier to effective multicultural collaboration.

McIntosh (1988) outlines the invisible nature of "white" privilege. Included in her article are forty-six questions Anglo Americans can ask themselves. Answers to those questions serve to raise the reader's consciousness of unearned privilege.

We had difficulty with the term "Collaboration" also. The Multnomah County Strategic Plan (1998) defines collaboration as "a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship between two or more entities for the purpose of increased outcomes, enhancing the probability of greater achievements together than separately." Although the Plan was designed by people with cross-cultural experience, the definition subtly supports Anglo American values more than the values of some ethnic minorities. For example, "greater achievement" may not be a central reason for many ethnic minorities to agree to collaborate; rather, ethnic minorities may meet primarily to form a foundation for trust, at least initially.

In addition, we found that ethnic minorities tend not to use the term "collaboration." In fact, we were advised by community leaders not to use the term because its use would indicate we had an Anglo American perspective. This document will use the expression "multicultural collaboration" to mean
"effective communication across ethnic communities, created by adapting to the expectations, communication styles, and values of the participants. The purpose of that communication is to work together and build trust."

While the word "respect" never arose among the Anglo American mainstream agency representatives we interviewed as an issue that affected collaboration, it was perhaps the central term each of the ethnic minority communities focused on as the problem. Being treated disrespectfully by agency staff was seen as a central barrier to collaboration by the ethnic minorities.

"Respectful" interaction includes treating others in a way that supports their feeling of being valued as individuals and as members of their cultures.

The words "ethnic," "culture," "cultural sensitivity," and "cultural competence" are used throughout this document. Please see the Glossary at the end of this document for definitions of these terms.

We have used the expression "ethnic minority communities" to refer to minority individuals or cultures. We are defining "ethnic minority community" as those persons who share membership within a group because of history, values, expectations, social experience, religion, nationality, language, traditions, culture, communication styles, self-identification, and/or physical appearance. Individuals are often identified as members of an ethnic group solely because of their appearance and/or dialect, but this is not a sufficient basis for establishing ethnicity.

A person’s ethnicity is a combination of

1. self definition
2. shared values
3. shared norms for behavior
4. group acceptance

If any of these four elements are missing, the individual should not be considered an adequate or appropriate representative for that ethnic group.

For example, individuals could be chosen to represent "persons of color" because of their appearance, but they may not identify with, associate with persons from, or operate according to the values of, the ethnic minority they appear to represent. They may have assimilated Anglo American cultural values, despite the fact they may sometimes experience discrimination from that culture.

Although persons may be discriminated against because they appear to be an ethnic minority, experiencing discrimination does not translate into an ability to represent the values of the minority group.

The following chapters provide a framework for understanding and adapting to diversity in communication. They can assist in avoiding barriers to trust that are invisible and ethnically based. The comparison may also permit better diagnosis of where trust has been violated in the past, so an appropriate mending of the relationships can begin.

Next Chapter
Stages of Intercultural Sensitivity
First Chapter

Executive Summary and List of Chapters
Stages of Intercultural Sensitivity

Purpose and Need
Our nation has evolved from a period in the 1800's, when racial discrimination was written into our laws, to a period in the 1960's and 1970's in which such discrimination was declared illegal. During the 1960's and 1970's, it may have been acceptable to say: "I treat everyone the same." This was considered a fair and liberal way of treating others. However, this stance has certain limitations; it assumes that sameness equals fairness, an assumption that only holds true if the values and norms of people involved in an interaction are similar. An outline of the process individuals go through to move beyond this assumption of similarity is provided in the work of Milton Bennett, who authored the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity. According to his model, such a statement places the speaker in an early stage of intercultural sensitivity (Bennett, 1993).

In the '80's and 90's organizations have attempted to go beyond mere discrimination issues and even to "celebrate diversity." However, celebration of diversity falls far short of what is needed for effective collaboration between mainstream agencies and ethnic minority communities. For organizations or individuals to move beyond "celebration" to a real ability to work appropriately with cultural difference requires a planned sequence of development.

Bennett describes six stages of development in intercultural sensitivity. The stages provide a good framework for determining how to work with and improve the capacity for intercultural sensitivity and collaboration. Some of his stages of "cultural sensitivity" include behaviors or adaptations the authors include under the definition of "cultural competence."

1. Bennett refers to the first stage of the model as "denial." It means that people in this stage are very unaware of cultural difference. If mainstream agency staff are in this stage of intercultural sensitivity, a huge problem can be expected in the delivery of education, health, and social services for ethnic minorities, a gap that does currently exist when these groups are compared to Anglo Americans. The task for staff at this first stage of intercultural sensitivity is to recognize cultural differences that are escaping their notice.

2. Whereas in the first stage we do not "see" cultural differences, in the second stage of cultural competence we do perceive cultural differences; however, differences from ourselves or the norms of our group are labeled very negatively. They are experienced as a threat to the centrality and "rightness" of our own value system. Bennett calls this stage "defense."

If staff of mainstream agencies achieve the second level of intercultural sensitivity, they still fail to communicate effectively with ethnic minorities. If they cannot communicate effectively, they cannot do the more complex task of collaborating effectively. The task in the second level of cultural sensitivity is recognize and to become more tolerant of differences and to see basic similarities among people of different cultures. However, little improvement in services can be expected if staff are below the third level of intercultural sensitivity.

3. In the third stage of intercultural sensitivity, minimization, we try to avoid stereotypes and even appreciate differences in language and culture. However, we still view many of our own values as universal, rather than viewing them simply as part of our own ethnicity. The task at the third level of intercultural sensitivity is to learn more about our own culture and to avoid projecting that culture onto other people's experience.

This stage is particularly difficult to pass through when one cultural group has vast and unrecognized privileges when compared to other groups. This problem is so invisible that persons in mainstream agencies are often mystified when representatives of ethnic minorities consistently withdraw from collaborative activities.
4. A reasonable goal for many mainstream agencies is to ensure that all staff achieve at least the fourth developmental level in intercultural sensitivity. The fourth stage in Bennett's model requires us to be able to shift perspective, while still maintaining our commitments to values. The task in this stage is to understand that the same behavior can have different meanings in different cultures. The comparisons that follow in the Toolkit can be particularly helpful for staff of mainstream agencies to improve their intercultural sensitivity in this stage of development. In order for collaboration to be successful long-term, this stage of intercultural sensitivity must be reached by the participants of the collaborative process. Bennett calls this stage "acceptance."

5. The fifth stage of intercultural sensitivity, adaptation, may allow the person to function in a bicultural capacity. In this stage, a person is able to take the perspective of another culture and operate successfully within that culture. This ability usually develops in a two-part sequence. It requires that the person know enough about his or her own culture and a second culture to allow a mental shift into the value scheme of the other culture, and an evaluation of behavior based on its norms, not the norms of the first individual’s culture of origin. This is referred to as "cognitive adaptation." The more advanced form of adaptation is "behavioral adaptation," in which the person can produce behaviors appropriate to the norms of the second culture. Persons serving as liaisons between a mainstream agency and an ethnic minority group need to be at this level of intercultural sensitivity.

6. In the sixth stage, the person can shift perspectives and frames of reference from one culture to another in a natural way. They become adept at evaluating any situation from multiple frames of reference. Some representatives in cross-cultural collaboration may reach this level, but most probably will not.

Stage six requires in-depth knowledge of at least two cultures (one's own and another), and the ability to shift easily into the other cultural frame of reference. The task at this level of development is to handle the identity issues that emerge from this cultural flexibility. Bennett calls this final stage of intercultural sensitivity "integration."

In order for a person to be bicultural and operate as a liaison between cultures, it is not sufficient for him or her to be from an ethnic minority. In fact, if a person who looks like a member of an ethnic minority group has adopted Anglo American values and identifies with the mainstream culture, he or she may be a poor choice to represent their culture of origin in collaborative efforts.

Such persons may not be trusted by the ethnic community that they "represent." In addition, if the representatives are assimilated rather than bicultural, they may also want to "correct" some of the key values or usual behaviors of the ethnic minority culture.

To summarize Bennett's stages of intercultural sensitivity:

**Stages of Intercultural Sensitivity**

1. Denial: Does not recognize cultural differences
2. Defense: Recognizes some differences, but sees them as negative
3. Minimization: Unaware of projection of own cultural values; sees own values as superior
4. Acceptance: Shifts perspectives to understand that the same "ordinary" behavior can have different meanings in different cultures
5. Adaptation: Can evaluate other's behavior from their frame of reference and can adapt
behavior to fit the norms of a different culture

6. Integration: Can shift frame of reference and also deal with resulting identity issues

The primary goal of the following comparisons is to assist staff with stages 4 and 5 of intercultural sensitivity, since development to this level is necessary for successful cross-cultural collaboration.

- The comparisons should help staff identify themselves on a continuum for each variable, and understand from this that their value system represents one cultural perspective among many. This may help persons with Anglo American values and communication styles to see those values and styles more clearly and in context. Hopefully, it will help Anglo Americans to "see" their own ethnicity.

- The comparisons will also help to identify arenas of difference that can destroy communication and collaboration, due to misinterpretation of culturally-based behaviors.

- The comparisons should help to clarify individual differences, as compared to group differences. Anglo Americans and others participating in a collaborative process should go through the summary chart and circle their own positions on each continuum. Virtually everyone who does this evaluation will find they have many behaviors and values similar to those typical of their own ethnic group, and perhaps some that fit more typically in others.

To know that a person comes from a certain ethnic background does not tell us where they fit in terms of values or behaviors; rather, it alerts us to possible arenas of miscommunication. We can then observe more carefully to see where that individual fits on a continuum of values, compared to his or her ethnic group.
How to Use Comparisons of Cultural Patterns

One of the stated core values of United States culture is respect for individual and group differences. As a country we have often fallen short of this value, yet our nation’s ethical base and the changing ethnic makeup of our population demand we seek new ways to ensure that “valuing diversity” becomes more than a catch-phrase. Given the depth and complexity of problems facing our nation and world today, we must find ways for leaders in public and private organizations to create work environments where all individuals can feel valued. All will then be encouraged to contribute as much as they can to the solutions we desperately need.

Many leaders in public services, in business, and in education environments are committed to this and genuinely want to see it happen, yet are continually disappointed in their efforts to create inclusive, relevant services and/or work environments. This is an absolutely necessary, watershed area of expertise for current and future leaders. The expectations of public service and the maintenance of profitability for private enterprises will increasingly depend on a leaders’ ability to become proficient in cross-cultural skills, assess culturally different employees accurately, design and implement programs relevant to many communities, and model these skills for subordinates. The cost of failure in this area will be far too high for leaders to choose to ignore cultural competency as an essential area of expertise.

One of the reasons a multicultural work environment has been difficult to create and sustain is that most individuals are unaware of the differing sets of communication assumptions, attributions, and especially behaviors that are normative in various cultures. This document attempts to remedy the lack of practical instruction in this area.

We do not provide a "checklist" for how to deal with members of culture X, Y, or Z. This is overly simplistic and patronizing to everyone. We do provide information in some practical areas of cultural difference. We emphasize norms, assumptions, and behaviors that often lead to misunderstanding and failure in attempts to collaborate and develop trusting and comfortable cross-cultural alliances.

Degree of Difference and Trust

It may be surprising to find that it is not the degree of difference between two ethnic groups that causes a loss of trust or even hostilities. Events in Kosovo, the Middle East, and Rwanda attest to the fact that extreme hostilities, based on ethnic differences, can emerge even when the differences between warring ethnic groups are slight when compared to the degree of difference between those two groups and both groups’ differences from other cultures. An example of large differences NOT leading to problems could be African Americans and Native Americans. These groups have large differences in communication style, but a generally high level of comfort and liking for each other, and a long history of forming alliances.

It is not the degree of difference between groups that causes harm. Rather, it is the lack of skill in identifying breaches of trust based on ethnic differences and the lack of skill in restoring trust once it is broken.
It is beyond the scope of this project to explain how trust can be restored across ethnic groups, but creating guidelines and training in this area would be a logical next step in the development of cross-cultural collaboration research.

**Adaptation and Individual Difference**

Within each of the federally defined "ethnic" groups in the U.S., there are critical communication-related areas that can serve as major sources of misunderstanding and misattribution of intent. Following is a short outline of some of the common areas of cross-cultural communication differences between major ethnic groups in the U.S.: African Americans, Asian Americans, Anglo or European Americans, Hispanic Americans/Latinos, and Native Americans.

All members of non-majority culture groups can be conceptualized as living on a continuum of adaptation to or assimilation into the dominant culture. The continuum can be graphed like this:

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\[ \begin{array}{c}
\text{à} \quad \text{No Cultural Adaptation} \quad \text{Total assimilation} \\
1. \quad \text{Persons living in total assimilation have adapted to the thinking patterns, values, family structures, hierarchies of perception, communication patterns, and forms of recreation of the dominant culture. They manifest communication behaviors that do not match the usual pattern for members of their cultural group.} \\
2. \quad \text{Persons with little cultural adaptation maintain the traditional patterns of their culture of origin; their behavior and assumptions will more closely match the behaviors specified below for their cultural group.} \\
3. \quad \text{Most members of a culture will fall somewhere in the middle of the continuum. Often their behaviors at work and in public settings will reflect the dominant-culture pattern. This does not mean, however, that their assumptions and internal reactions to communicative behavior that violates their group’s norms will have changed. A member of a non-dominant culture may have a continual source of extra workplace stress due to constant violations of their expectations and norms for interaction, and the ongoing need to consciously adapt and "fit" their behavior to an alien pattern.} \\
4. \quad \text{Depending on a culture’s pattern of communication, individuals may not let you know when their expectations or norms have been violated or when they are offended, or at least they may not let you know in a way easy for you to perceive or understand, given the norms of your culture.} \\
5. \quad \text{Becoming more aware of the norms for interaction in one’s own culture is a most difficult task, because such norms are internalized very early and become an unconscious component of our expectations of and behavior with others. It is a very crucial task, because only through making these norms conscious can we begin to adapt our behavior to the expectations of the groups or co-workers we are attempting to collaborate with, or at least lessen our tendency to misattribute meanings and motivations to others based on our own cultural norms.} \\
6. \quad \text{Comparisons of cultural value systems are not meant to stereotype individuals; rather, they are meant to provide generalizations, valid observations about a group of people, from which we can discuss cultural difference and likely areas of miscommunication.}
\end{array} \]
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Communication Patterns and Assumptions  
of Differing Cultural Groups in the United States


African American Communication Patterns

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (1999), African Americans comprise 13 percent of the U.S. population.

Animation/emotion: Communication seen as authentic is generally passionate and animated. Communication that is presented in a neutral or objective way is seen as less credible, and the motives of the speaker may be questioned. The assumption is that if you believe something, you will advocate for it. Truth is established through argument and debate. "Conversational style is provocative and challenging, and the intensity is focused on the validity of the ideas being discussed" (Kochman 1981 pp. 30-31). Effective teachers of African American students are often found ".....displaying emotion to garner student respect" (Delpit, 1995, p. 142). African Americans tend to perceive greater emotional intensity when rating the expressions of others (Matsumoto, 1993).

Directness/indirectness: Generally directly facing and talking with the person with whom you have an issue or problem is preferred. Someone who won’t face you directly shows his or her claim or problem to be invalid; the assumption is that anyone with a legitimate problem would come to the other person directly. A lack of response to a general accusation or allegation by someone is viewed as an indication of innocence. The internal attitude of an innocent person is "I know they aren't talking about me, so I don't have to respond."(Kochman 1981 p.90). Responding to a general accusation shows that the "mark hit home." A direct accusation will usually bring a direct denial and a request to confront the person making the allegation.

In terms of romance, men and often women will usually state directly whether they are interested in a potential relationship. Ignoring or acting subtly disinterested is not interpreted as a sign of disinterest from a woman; it may be seen as a rude or arrogant response (Kochman 1981).

Teachers are often expected to show they care by "...controlling the class; exhibiting personal power; establishing meaningful personal relationships;.... pushing students to achieve the (class) standard; and holding the attention of the students by incorporating African-American interactional styles in their teaching" (Delpit, 1995, p. 142).

Eye contact: Tends to be quite direct and prolonged when speaking, less so when listening. This is the opposite of the dominant-culture pattern in which the speaker tends to look away from the listener and the listener looks directly at the speaker. The overall amount of eye contact is not different from dominant-culture patterns; it is when the eye contact occurs that differs (Johnson, 1971, p. 17).

Gestures: Frequent and sometimes large gestures are normative. The expressiveness of the communication is what is valued, and if the gestures increase expressiveness they are seen as enhancing communication. (V. Valdez, September 1998, personal communication).

Identity orientation: Traditionally, African Americans have a more collateral orientation than European Americans (Nichols 1986, management training session). Self is viewed and decisions are made within the context of the group and by assessing how the action will affect others in the collateral identity group.

Turn taking and pause time: Turns are taken when the speaker is moved to speak; urgency, status, and the ability to command attention from others determines speaking order. The right to continue speaking is granted by others depending on how well the speaker’s idea is being accepted (Kochman 1981 pp. 34). Responses from others are usually made at the end of each of the speaker’s points, and this is not felt to be an interruption of the speaker (Kochman 1981 pp.26-27). Turn taking in dyads is also regulated by
non-verbal cues that differ markedly from those of the dominant culture. These include: hand gestures, postural shifts which mirror the conversational partner, intonation drop, tempo slowing, and lessening of intensity. The change in gaze direction employed in the dominant culture is often not used (LaFrance & Mayo, 1975, pp. 7-8).

Pause time is often brief; people in groups may interrupt or speak on the ends of other’s sentences.

**Space:** Research on use of space among African Americans is mixed. Some studies indicate that, in race-matched pairs, black children will stand closer to each other during conversation than white children do. Other research has shown that African American adults employ a greater public distance from each other (LaFrance & Mayo, 1978, pp. 79-80).

**Time:** Linear time is not internalized to the extent it is in the dominant society. Being a more relationship-oriented culture, African Americans tend to be more relaxed in this regard—“The right time is when we get there.” Anger from others at being late is often met with puzzlement—“I’m here now, let’s get started” is a common response to this kind of situation (Nichols 1986).

**Touch:** Among friends, African Americans employ more physical touch than European Americans do (LaFrance & Mayo, 1978, pp. 80-81) and less than that usually seen among people of Latin or Arab cultures. African Americans tend to touch children more often and for greater lengths of time than do European-Americans (Coles, 1971).

**Vocal patterns:** Black English contains a wide range of both volume and pitch within its acceptable pattern. The voice can range from a very quiet, deep sound to very loud and high-pitched, and all may be considered appropriate. Expressiveness and compatibility with the speaking situation is what determines whether the pitch and tone are “correct” (Olquin, 1995). There is not a fixed, relatively narrow range, as is the case in some other cultures.

**Native American Communication Patterns**

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (1999), 2.2 million persons were classified as American Indians or Alaska Natives in 1994. (Approximately 1.5% of the U.S. population).

**Animation/emotion:** The preferred communication style is restrained, "...in order to not impose one's energy or emotion on others” (Elliott, 1992). Often Indians will speak dispassionately about something very meaningful and important to them.

**Directness/indirectness:** Indirectness is usually preferable (Locust, 1988). This gives others the chance to refuse a request without directly saying no, or to evade a question that is felt to be too personal or simply a subject the listener does not want to discuss (Darnell, 1988, p. 5). Elders with high status may sometimes be very direct with those younger than themselves. An untrue allegation or accusation will often simply result in no response from an Indian person; to reply is seen as lowering oneself to the level of ignorance or over-emotionality of the other person. It also involves entering the negative energy space of the accuser (Locust, 1988, p. 122) and may be interpreted by other Indians as a sign of guilt, an indicator that the accusation is true. Silence on the part of Indian people is often interpreted by Anglos as indirectness, although the actual meaning may be quite different (Basso, 1970, p. 218).

**Eye contact:** Direct prolonged eye contact is seen as invasive. It’s avoidance is practiced to "protect the personal autonomy of the interactors“ (Darnell, 1988, p. 6). Eye contact is usually fleeting, and the gaze of listener and speaker will often remain around the forehead, mouth, ear or throat area. Direct gaze to an elder or very respected person is seen as especially rude, unless one is in a formal listening/storytelling situation, in which case “…listeners may look at (the speaker) more directly … without violating his or her personal space by eye contact” ( Darnell, 1988, p. 15).
**Gestures:** A relatively restrained use of gestures in normal conversation is typical. Storytellers or elders may often use gestures, which are larger and more frequent than those found in usual conversations.

**Identity orientation:** Traditional American Indians have a lineal orientation—their identity is spread vertically over time. Ancestors, the present collateral group or tribe, and the potential people who are not yet born are all part of a person’s felt identity and will be considered when making important decisions (Samovar, Porter, and Jain, 1981).

**Turn taking and pause time:** In formal group speaking situations, turns are usually taken by everyone present, and no one else speaks until the previous speaker is completely through and a few moments of silence have ensued (Darnell, 1988, p. 5). Speaking too quickly after the previous speaker may be seen to indicate that the next speaker, talking so quickly after the first, is a rash person who does not think things through before he or she speaks, or is showing disrespect for the importance of the other person or of what they had to say. Interrupting another speaker is unbearable rudeness, and may lead to severe social consequences if the person interrupted is an elder. When interacting with members of other cultures in which appropriate pause times are shorter, Indians may have to be rude (by their own standards) in order to participate in the conversation at all (Basso, 1988, p. 12). This is a stressful experience for the person, who feels forced to violate their own standards and self-concept in order to be heard.

**Space:** Often a side-by-side arrangement is more comfortable than a face-to-face orientation, especially in two-person conversations. If interacting with non-Indians or people whom they do not know well, Native Americans often prefer a slightly larger interaction distance—more than arm’s length—for conversation. Psychological space can be maintained by silence. This may be employed if the listener is asked a question he or she feels is invasive or regards as something that should not be addressed with the other person, because the other does not have the standing of an intimate friend or relative. Sometimes the subject is simply seen as inappropriate.

**Time:** For Native people raised in a traditional environment, "clock" time is not internalized to the same degree as it is in the dominant culture. The "right time" for something is when everything and everyone comes together; then the appropriate activity will ensue. Time is felt to be more a matter of season, general time of day, or when the person is internally ready for a particular activity. "Every living thing has its own inherent (time) system and you must deal with each plant or animal in terms of its own time" (Hall, 1976, p. 71). The imposition of "clock time" by members of other cultures may be interpreted as arrogant, uncaring, or oppressive behavior. Related to this is the tendency of Indian parents not to worry if their child is "not developing on time" according to others’ cultural or psychological standards.

**Touch:** Touch is usually reserved for friends or intimates; however, many Indians have adopted the European American custom of handshaking, at least outside of traditional settings. The Indian handshake is very light and fleeting, to avoid imposing energy on the other person or receiving energy one does not want.

**Vocal patterns:** A relatively narrow, quiet range of pitch, tone, and volume is viewed as the proper adult communication pattern, especially when non-Indians or elders are present. Talking quickly, loudly, and very animatedly may be viewed with some disapproval.

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**Anglo or European American Communication Patterns**

European Americans (ER’s) comprise around % of the U.S. population.

**Animation/Emotion:** Emotionally expressive communication is not a preferred mode in public communication situations. In fact, European Americans worry that intensely emotional interactions may
lead to a loss of self-control, and therefore should be avoided. (Kochman, 1981). What people know is not necessarily expressed in behavior. There is a strong preference to preserve the appearance of cordiality and friendliness, even when strong differences of opinion are present. European Americans prefer to speak about beliefs, opinions, intentions and commitments. The prescribed value of "equality" in U.S. culture commonly leads to a presumption of sameness: people assume that if they feel or think a certain way about a situation, others would feel or think much as they do, if placed in the same or a similar situation (Samovar, Porter, & Jain, 1981).

Directness/indirectness: European Americans tend to speak very directly about certain things. Their general form of communication tends to rely heavily on logic and technical information rather than allusion, metaphor, or other more creative or emotional styles of persuasion. "Good" communication is believed to be linear: the speaker should move through their "points" in a straight, logical line, with an explicitly stated conclusion (Kaplan, 1967; Stewart & Bennett, 1991, p.156).

Eye Contact: The European American convention for eye contact is for the speaker to make intermittent brief contact with the listener, and for the listener to gaze fairly steadily at the speaker. Children are specifically taught to look at the speaker (Kochman, 1981), and will be reprimanded if they do not. Direct eye contact is believed to be a sign of honesty and sincerity (Stewart & Bennett, 1991, p. 99; Johnson, 1971, p. 17; Althen, 1988, pp.143-144).

Gestures: European Americans tend to use a "medium" range of gestures in usual conversation—not so large or frequent as Arabs or Southern Italians but not as restrained as the English or Japanese (Althen, 1988, pp.141-142).

Identity orientation: European Americans have an individualism orientation. They view the "self" as located within the individual person, who is seen as having a separate but equal place among other individuals. Self is viewed, and mature identity is believed to be formed, primarily as an autonomous individual. Children are raised to become self-sufficient; ideally, neither they nor their parents expect them to live with older generations of the family after about the age of twenty. A young person who lives with parents after this age may be regarded questionably by themselves and others (Condon, 1997; Althen, 1988, p. 5).

Turn taking and pause time: Ideally, turn taking is signaled by the speaker looking directly at the listener and ceasing to speak. Pause time is very brief; often people speak on the end of the first speaker's last sentence (Kochman, 1981).

Space: The usual distance for social conversation is 2-3 feet--about arm's length. Standing closer than this will usually be perceived as intimacy or invasiveness, depending on the relationship of those involved.

Time: In European American culture, time is thought of as linear and monochronic — that is, one thing or one person at a time should be given full attention. Time is conceptualized as having a past, present, and future, and is often thought of as a real object "which should be saved and not wasted" (Samovar, Porter, & Jain, 1981, pp. 113-114). It is not seen as a human-made abstraction. People often speak of losing, wasting, or finding time. Many European Americans feel pressured by the passage of time, and consequently tend to behave in an "efficient" and task-oriented way. If a person has an appointment with you at 3:00, most European Americans would begin to be affronted if the person is not there by a few minutes after 3:00, and would want an explanation of why they are not. This behavior can be interpreted by members of other cultures as coldness—U.S. Americans may be seen as having little interest in personal relationships and trust building, valuing only efficiency (Condon, 1997).

Touch: Most European Americans tend to "employ very little touching in public" (Samovar, Porter, & Jain, p. 175) that is, beyond the expected greeting ritual of the handshake. Lack of touching may be related to cultural values of objectivity, efficiency, and autonomy. European Americans have been described by
members of other cultures as touch-avoidant. Compared to the amount of touch that occurs in Latin American, Southern European and Arab cultures, this is certainly true.

**Vocal patterns:** Tend to be in a mid-range of pitch and on the low end of vocal variation. "Adult," mature communication in public is believed to be objective, rational, and relatively non-emotional. Someone who is expressing himself or herself in a very passionate way may be suspected of irrationality (Kochman, 1981).

**Thought patterns and Rhetorical style:** Directness in stating the point, purpose, or conclusion of a communication is the preferred style (Kaplan, 1967). Kaplan describes the English language style graphically as an arrow:

![Arrow Diagram]

This style of communication may be viewed by other cultural groups, with quite different styles, as abrupt or inappropriate. It is in strong contrast to the Asian style, portrayed by Kaplan as a spiral. It is also quite different from the Romance style (including Hispanic), which is portrayed as an arrow with sharp turns in the shaft.

**Asian American Communication Patterns**

"Asian" is a very broad term, encompassing people from southern India to Indonesia to northern Mongolia. The statements below apply most clearly to people from northern Asian countries such as Japan or China, although they may apply in varying degree to Asian people (or their descendants) from other nations. "Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are persons of Asian or Pacific Islander ancestry" and represent "more than 50 ethnic groups and speak more than 800 languages or dialects. Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are the fastest-growing segment of the U.S. population, nearly tripling in size from 3.5 million in 1980 to almost 9.6 million in 1998." (CDC, 1999). People designated as "Asian" comprise approximately % of the U.S. population.

**Animation/emotion:** The control of emotional display is highly valued. An overt display of strong emotion could result in a loss of face for both the speaker and the listener.

**Eye contact:** Japan and China are overtly hierarchical societies in which it is always important to know one’s status relative to the person one is speaking with, so the proper forms of language and nonverbal communication can be used. Direct eye contact lasting longer than a second or two is avoided, especially with those superior to oneself in the hierarchy or with elders. To behave otherwise would be disrespectful.

**Gestures:** Gestures are usually kept close to the body and are quite restrained. They are used less frequently than is normal among English or Spanish speakers.

**Identity orientation:** Japan is usually characterized as a group-oriented collateral society, similar to Latin American or Arab cultures. This means a person’s identity and status are intimately tied to the identity and status of their family, and this persists throughout the individual’s life span. Decisions are often made in relation to obligations to family, and secondarily to one’s own desires. In Japan this sense of "family obligation" and a tie to the sense of personal identity may be extended to the company one works for. China is seen as a lineal culture, also group oriented, but with a greater sense of personal identity being tied to ancestors and to forthcoming generations than is experienced by most modern Japanese-Americans.
**Pacing and pause time:** Normally the pause employed is somewhat longer than that of European Americans, and a little shorter than the pause typical of Native Americans.

**Time:** Traditionally, time is seen as cyclical and ever-returning. Asian cultures are masters of waiting till "the time is right." They excel in long-term planning and the initiation and maintenance of long-term relationships.

**Touch:** In public settings, touch is often so rare as to be virtually non-existent. In one study which measured from, to whom, and where on the body touch was allowed, "Japanese college students received less touch from mothers and other family members than U.S. Americans received from casual acquaintances" (Barnlund 1975 p. 154).

**Vocal patterns:** A relatively quiet and low-key vocal pattern is the ideal. The overt expression of emotion is considered unseemly and childish (Tada 1975). Northern Asians, especially Japanese, tend to express emotion by "intuitive, nonverbal communication of the sort that develops among family members living under one roof" (Kunihiro 1976, p. 53). Indirect allusion and metaphor are often used to express deep emotion. "The value of suppression and restraint has deep historical roots for the Japanese." (Ramsey 1985, p. 310).

**Thought patterns and Rhetorical style:** Directness in stating the point, purpose, or conclusion of a communication is not considered appropriate (Kaplan, R. 1967). Kaplan describes the Asian style graphically as a spiral:

![Spiral](image)

This style of communication may be viewed by other cultural groups as evasive or obscure. It is in strong contrast to the European American style, portrayed by Kaplan as a straight arrow.

**Hispanic American Communication Patterns**

"There are approximately 30 million Americans living in the United States who are of Latin American or other Spanish descent, comprising 11.1% of the total population." (CDC, 1999). As of 1994, "64 percent were Mexican Americans, 11 percent were Puerto Ricans, 13 percent were from Central and South America or the Caribbean, 5 percent were Cuban Americans, and 7 percent were classified as 'Other' Hispanics." (Department of Health and Human Services/Public Health Service, 1997)

Terms used to refer to this group of people can be controversial (Andrews, 1999). Some use the expression "Spanish people" to denote all people who speak Spanish, but the expression should not apply to anyone other than individuals who are natives of Spain. Many use the term "Hispanics," to denote all who speak Spanish, but, again, this term does not literally apply to any people who do not claim a lineage or cultural heritage related to Spain.

"Latino" is used to refer to people with a lineage or cultural heritage related to Latin America, but should not be used to refer to the millions of Native Americans in the region. Many use the term "Mexican" to refer to persons with a lineage or cultural heritage related to Mexico, but it should only be used to refer to the nationality of inhabitants of Mexico. U.S. citizens from Mexico often object to being referred to as "Mexicans", as do members of indigenous groups in Mexico.
"Mexican-American" is another term sometimes used to refer to U.S. citizens with a lineage or cultural heritage related to Mexico, but, again, many object to this use. The argument against "Mexican-American" is that other nationalities, such as Germans, are not referred to as "German-Americans."

The term "Chicano" has been used recently as a distinct way to refer to U.S. citizens of Mexican heritage, but it was originally used as a derogatory term and is sometimes considered unsavory among more "assimilated" Mexican-Americans. It often has a connotation of political awareness and activism.

Another group of persons from Mexico do not refer to themselves as "Americans" at all. They consider themselves to be in an occupied country because only 150 years ago large numbers of Mexicans became "American" citizens overnight, when the United States won 50 percent of what was Mexico as the spoils of war in the treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo. In fact, the treaty specifically recognized the rights of such people to retain the property deeded to them by Mexican or Spanish colonial authorities and to receive education in Spanish. (The treaty has obviously not been honored.)

A group that also does not refer to themselves as "Mexican-Americans" are those who are in the United States because of economic conditions and plan to return permanently to Mexico as soon as it is economically feasible. Although they may have U.S. citizenship, their ties are primarily with family and friends in Mexico.

In short, if persons have cultural roots in Mexico, more should be learned before referring to them with any single term. If persons have a cultural heritage from Latin America, "Latino" is an appropriate term. Otherwise, "Hispanic" is the most widely used nomenclature at this time.

**Animation/Emotion:** In public ethnically mixed settings or with unfamiliar persons, Latinos or Hispanics tend to be somewhat low-key. They may often state their points quite directly, but in a relatively quiet and respectful manner. In settings with only Hispanics present, a high level of emotional expression is acceptable. (Olquin, 1995).

**Eye Contact:** Direct eye contact is often viewed as disrespectful. When a person from a Latin culture is being spoken to, they may look away or down as a sign of respect to the person speaking, especially if that person is significantly older than the listener or is in a position of authority over them (LaFrance & Mayo, 1976).

**Gestures:** People from Latin cultures tend to use a medium to high level of gestures. This is consonant with a cultural pattern that considers a higher level of emotionality in expression to be the norm (Kaplan, 1967; Albert & Nelson, 1993).

**Identity orientation:** Latino cultures in general have a collateral orientation. This means the person’s identity is intimately tied to the identity and status of their family throughout the individual’s life span. Decisions are often made in relation to obligations to family, and secondarily to one’s own desires (Condon & Yousef, 1975).

**Pacing & pause time:** If the person’s first language is Spanish, pause time tends to be relatively short. Among indigenous groups, the pause time will be considerably longer, perhaps approaching that of Native people from what is now the continental United States (Bennett, 1996).

**Space:** Latino’s interpersonal distance tends to be somewhat less than that of European Americans (ER’s). The typical 2-3 foot “arm’s length” spacing preferred by European Americans is experienced by many Hispanics as cold, unfriendly, or a way for the ER to show superiority. Since both people’s expectations for “normal” social distances are often unconscious, one can witness the phenomena of the ER being backed across the room by a Hispanic person, as each tries to conduct the conversation in a way that feels right for them. This may be amusing to witness but is very uncomfortable for both participants (Bennett, 1996).
Time: Latinos tend to operate in a polychronic fashion—that is, many activities may be going on at once, and priority is given to the immediate needs of people, especially those involved in one’s collateral network. Time is a fluid and malleable concept (Condon, 1997).

Touch: Latin cultures tend to use touch more than cultures originating in Northern Europe, the U.S., or Canada. Levels of touch between members of the same sex occur far more often in public settings in predominately Hispanic cultures than they do in European American culture, and do not carry the sexual connotation such behavior often has in the U.S (Condon, 1997).

Vocal patterns: The normal range of voice pitch for Spanish speakers is narrower than it is for native English speakers; often pitch and volume that are part of “normal” conversation in English are only present in Spanish in the “angry” range of conversation. Consequently the Spanish speaker may experience the European American as arrogant or intimidating. The English speaker may experience the Hispanic as shy, lacking self-confidence, or think the Spanish-speaker is mumbling when they are only speaking in the range that is "normal" for them (Olquin, 1995).

Volume: In business conversation, a quiet and somewhat formal way of speaking is appropriate for the Spanish speaker. The Hispanic can experience the European American as “yelling at me” or showing irritation when the English speaker operates at their normal volume (Olquin, 1995).

Thought patterns and Rhetorical style: Directness in stating the point, purpose, or conclusion of a communication is not the preferred style (Kaplan, 1967). Kaplan describes the pattern of a Romance language as an arrow that makes sharp turns before getting to its destination. The journey is part of the valued experience:

\[\text{\textarrow} \]

This style of communication may be viewed by European Americans as disorganized or intellectually weak, since it violates the direct linear cause-and-effect norms of English speakers.
Summary of Normative Communication Styles and Values

The purpose of the Summary of Normative Communication Styles and Values chart is to identify arenas of difference between ethnic groups that can destroy trust and respect when the differences are unknown to one or both parties in a communication. These unknown or invisible differences in communication style and values also create difficulties because they may be presumed to be individual personality or ethical issues.

To use an example from another field, persons with disabilities often find that they are left out of conversations, not given eye contact, and subtly avoided or excluded in other ways at a personal level. This avoidance may be invisible to all but the persons with disabilities. Children are taught, at an early age, not to stare at people who are different. They are taught not to ask persons with disabilities "embarrassing" questions. In short, children are taught that it is not socially safe to interact with persons with disabilities—or anyone who is very different from them. One result of such training may be for adults to unintentionally avoid persons with disabilities, as well as persons who are different from them in other ways. As children we were not sure why we were discouraged from interacting; as adults we are often not even aware how and when we avoid interaction with others.

The chart may therefore be used in a training or self-assessment activity, as well as for information to improve communication. (See the Assessment Tools section of this guide.) As a self-assessment or training tool, the chart may help in the following ways:

- Provide participants with a sense of excitement and interest regarding the exploration of less-obvious ethnic differences
- Help participants feel more comfortable talking about issues related to ethnic and cultural differences
- Increase the awareness of participants regarding their own ethnicity, as well as the ethnicity of others; this awareness is a foundation for improving cultural competence.
- Provide an assessment tool for clarifying ethnic patterns

How are individual differences taken into account in a summary of ethnic patterns? How about the problem of stereotyping people?

One cannot know an individual's communication style or values based on group affiliation.

Individuals may vary from group norms because of bicultural skills, adaptation to the mainstream culture, assimilation, variations in heritage, amount of exposure to cultural norms, living abroad, or other reasons. Persons may not have the heritage and/or cultural affiliation they "appear" to have. Even if they do, they may vary from the group norms on some values or communication behaviors.

If individuals can vary so much from how they "appear," how can one use a summary of patterns? What is a "correct" use of the comparison of group patterns?

Even though individuals vary from group norms, research has shown that normative patterns do exist for each ethnic group.
One purpose of the summary of patterns is to help those who are ethnically "European or Anglo American" to understand that they do, in fact, have an ethnic pattern that is normally invisible to them. European Americans are not just "Heinz 57" or just "Americans," although these are common responses when European Americans are asked to state their cultural affiliation; when applied to themselves, culture is often a fuzzy concept. European Americans focus more on the present and the future, rather than trying to understand how their views--handed on from others--fit within the world community. This too is an ethnic or cultural value.

How can we adapt effectively if we are cannot see how our views fit within the larger world community?

European Americans do have a specific ethnic experience, a point of view, and a set of biases about what "normal" should be. That view about normalcy affects how they treat others in powerful--and invisible--ways.

Invisible biases need to become visible, and be seen in relationship to other communication styles and values. Research on intercultural communication suggests that this is a vital early step in handling discrimination and is certainly necessary in order for mainstream agency administrators to improve their cultural competence. Each of us has biases; we gain our biases naturally as we are socialized within any culture or ethnic group.

Having biases is not what causes most of the harm.

People are hurt when we fail to "see" our biases, understand them, and then use our improved self-understanding to become more effective in adapting our views and behaviors to the needs of others.

What is your communication style? Go to My Communication Style and check the boxes to summarize your own communication style when working with someone in a work setting. Then compare your communication style with the normative communication style of someone with a different ethnic background. Go to Normative Communication Styles to see different patterns from your own. Where are the biggest differences? Do you have a strategy to bridge those differences?

Next Chapter
Ten Myths That Prevent Collaboration Across Cultures

First Chapter
Executive Summary and List of Chapters
Normative Communication Styles and Values

The purpose of the Normative Communication Styles and Values chart is to identify arenas of difference between ethnic groups that can destroy trust and respect when the differences are unknown to one or both parties in a communication. These 34 unknown or invisible differences in communication style and values also create difficulties because they may be presumed to be individual personality or ethical issues.

Summary

Normative Communication Styles & Values
For Cross-Cultural Collaboration

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication Style</th>
<th>Very little</th>
<th>Little</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Much</th>
<th>Very Much</th>
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<td>Animation/Emotional Expression</td>
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<td>Hispanic*</td>
<td>Anglo*</td>
<td>African*</td>
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<td>Gestures</td>
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<td>Angelo</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>African</td>
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<td>Range of Pitch between words</td>
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<td>Anglo</td>
<td>African</td>
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<td>Volume of speech</td>
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<td>African, Anglo</td>
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<td>Directness of answers</td>
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*Asian American, African American, Anglo or European American, Native American, Hispanic American or Latino

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<td>Hispanic, Anglo</td>
<td>Asian</td>
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<td>Hispanic, Native, African</td>
<td>Anglo, Asian</td>
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<td>Native, African, Hispanic</td>
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<td>Anglo</td>
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<td>Speed of Response</td>
<td>Native</td>
<td>Hispanic, Asian</td>
<td>African, Anglo</td>
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<td>Anglo</td>
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Next Chapter

**Ten Myths That Prevent Collaboration Across Cultures**

First Chapter

**Executive Summary and List of Chapters**
My Normative Communication Styles and Values

The purpose of My Normative Communication Styles and Values chart is to identify arenas of difference between ethnic groups that can destroy trust and respect when the differences are unknown to one or both parties in a communication. These unknown or invisible differences in communication style and values also create difficulties because they may be presumed to be individual personality or ethical issues. By identifying your own style, you can then "see" differences that may have been hidden between yourself and someone with another ethnic background.

What is your communication style? Check the boxes to summarize your own communication style when working with someone in a work setting. Then compare your communication style with the normative communication style of someone with a different ethnic background. Go to Normative Communication Styles to see different patterns from your own. Where are the biggest differences? Do you have a strategy to bridge those differences?

Summary
Normative Communication Styles & Values
For Cross-Cultural Collaboration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication Style (Review of Literature)</th>
<th>Very little</th>
<th>Little</th>
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<th>Very Much</th>
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<td>Animation/Emotional Expression</td>
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<td>Gestures</td>
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<td>Range of Pitch between words</td>
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<td>Volume of speech</td>
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<td>Directness of questions</td>
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<td>Directness of answers</td>
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<td>Directness of rhetorical style, &quot;getting to the point&quot;</td>
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<td>Accusations require a direct response</td>
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<td>Directness of eye contact</td>
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<td>Firm, long handshaking</td>
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<td>Touching</td>
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<td>Concern with clock time</td>
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</table>
Hierarchical membership in group

Individualism more than lineal identity

Individualism more than collateral group identity

Awareness of unearned "white" privilege

Closeness when standing

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Next Chapter

**Ten Myths That Prevent Collaboration Across Cultures**

First Chapter

**Executive Summary and List of Chapters**
Ten Myths That Prevent Collaboration Across Cultures

Immigrant and other cultural groups in the U.S. have been and are forced to play a "game." The game is called "Assimilation." It means giving up your own values and adopting the values of others, as a means to "success" or economic survival. No one enjoys forced or coerced assimilation, by the Borg, the dominant culture, or anyone else. The process is not only uncomfortable, it hurts; it is a violation of another's identity and inner self.

Those of us brought up as members of the dominant culture may fight total assimilation in our own ways, vicariously through anti-heroes in the movies, by contesting unfair rules of organizations, and other means.

Those of us brought up as members of other traditions, however, are often in conflict. We may fight assimilation by the dominant culture, by our traditional culture, or both. That leaves us in a difficult situation. In the next few years we will number approximately half of the population in the United States. Assimilation is an emerging issue that must be dealt with for successful management and delivery of services during the next century.

Assimilation is actually a false game; at some level we all know this. The real choice is not "assimilation" or "traditional values." We know that we can learn to understand and appreciate the values, expectations, and communication styles of other traditions without giving up our own. We can adjust appropriately and effectively to different values and communication styles if we learn how to first perceive and then adapt to them. Such understanding is called multicultural competence. Virtually all of us lack it.

We are conditioned from birth to not have cultural competence in any culture but our own; instead we are usually socialized to appreciate only the culture in which we are reared. For a "close to home" example of how most of us are conditioned, try the Implicit Attitudes test on the Web at:
http://www.tolerance.org/hidden_bias/02.html

Understanding that almost all of us lack this, how do we help all of our staff to gain IT, (multicultural competence) so they CAN administer or provide services in a more effective manner? One way is to begin to break down the myths and lack of understanding we have regarding other cultures and our attempts to collaborate with them.

Myths

1. That simply by virtue of membership in a cultural group, a person will be able to deal with others of that population in a culturally competent way. Not true.

If such persons have assimilated the values and communication styles of the Anglo culture as their own, they may be even less tolerant of traditional values or styles than Anglos. Equally important, they may not be trusted by their own communities if they have internalized Anglo values.

2. That a member of a minority community who works in a mainstream agency is able to represent his or her community. Not true.
Unless they are respected leaders within their communities, they are not considered by their communities to be appropriate representatives. Respected elders often provide leadership within ethnic communities. However, the elders often have no role of visibility or authority within the Anglo culture and must be "found." In order to have an effective relationship with the ethnic community, trust and respect from the elders must be gained first.

3. That a single member of "the" minority community can represent the whole. Not true.

For example, there really is no "Hispanic community" in most cities. There are, rather, Hispanic communities. Individuals from Puerto Rico, Mexico, Spain, and Peru, for example, would not consider themselves to be from the "same" community. We speak of the African American community, the Hispanic community, the Asian Community, and the Native American community, when there really are no such communities. An analogy may help clarify this myth:

Our view is like that of residents in a remote village in Australia when the first tourist bus arrives. The villagers think that the visiting European Americans, Russians, and Italians are all from the same community because they look so much alike (compared to the native Australians). The villagers do notice that the tourists speak, look, move, and dress somewhat differently from each other, but those differences are trivial compared to how different the tourists as a group are from themselves.

The villagers then appoint one of the tourists as the representative, for not only this group, but for all of the tourists that may someday arrive from different touring companies and countries.

The analogy may sound absurd, but it is sadly accurate.

4. That an agency should chose a representative from a minority community to represent that community's interests to the agency. Not true.

Anglo agencies should not presume to select representatives for ethnic communities. Each community already has a leadership structure. Rather, the agency's task is to identify the structure and then find a common ground for communication, working with existing leadership in the particular community.

5. That, because there are so many ethnic communities, it is not feasible, or cost-effective to have working relationships with them. Not true.

Selecting a minority representative will not work, but selecting a minority liaison can work. The role of the liaison is not to represent a community, but rather to understand the community's leadership structure, to win the trust and respect of that leadership, and to develop a working relationship between the community and the agency. In order to do this successfully, the liaison must be multiculturally competent.

6. That the Anglo or dominant culture is the U.S. culture, not simply a culture. Not true.

This is one of the most difficult myths, not from a logical point of view, but because of invisible assumptions and expectations. For most people reared as Anglo Americans, Anglo American assumptions and expectations are presumed, unconsciously, to be "human" assumptions and expectations. If we see someone speaking with a certain pitch of voice and gestures, we assume that the person is agitated or angry; we rarely conceive the thought that we might be misinterpreting their behavior because of our own cultural norms. If someone else seems indifferent to a suggestion, again, we think that we understand what we see. Our culturally based assumptions and interpretations are so completely ingrained that we experience them spontaneously--and invisibly.

Members of all cultures tend to internalize and become consciously unaware of their own norms. For members of a dominant group in a culture this condition is exaggerated; they are usually surrounded by
people and institutions based on their set of values. Thus that system is constantly reinforced, and they have less exposure to contrasting values and behaviors than do members of minority groups.

7. That the key differences in culture are lifestyle, language, foods, and similar visible evidence of diversity, often taught in "diversity appreciation" classes in public schools. Not true.

The key differences, the "trust and respect breakers," are not generally the obvious differences. It is often the invisible differences in expectations, values, goals, and communication styles that cause cultural differences to be misinterpreted as personal violations of trust or respect. To assist in unraveling these key differences, we developed the Normative Communication Styles and Values chart.

8. That cultural competence is something we each pick up, with time, by working with persons who are different from ourselves. Not true.

Cultural competence is a skill, and perhaps an ability that requires substantial effort to learn. Working with someone from a different ethnic tradition does not necessarily lead to uncovering differences in expectations, communication styles, and values. An analogy is that of a married couple that has lived together 50 years or more. Even they can fail to learn each other's underlying assumptions, expectations, and communication styles. Instead of learning these invisible differences, they develop a reliable and consistent misinterpretation, which leads to predictability in the relationship, not understanding.

9. That collecting information from a community can be "task-based" rather than "relationship-based." Not True.

The basis for collecting information in many non-Anglo American households is personal. That is, the accuracy of the information given to a collector of information will be related to how well that person is known and trusted, not how important the information seems to be. This is a difference in values between Anglo American and other cultures. Whether the person collecting the data is from the U.S. Census, the local university, or any other place that might have credibility for Anglo Americans, this will not ensure credibility or cooperation in other communities.

One consequence of this difference, since Anglo American agencies are usually in charge of data collection, is that information gathered regarding communities is often inaccurate; needs of the communities are often severely under reported.

The solution is not to send someone to the door that "looks" as if he or she fits in the neighborhood. The solution needs to be personal. The person answering the door needs to already know and trust the person collecting the information in order for the results to have strong validity. In order to do this, the agency needs to work with the existing leadership structure of the community to develop a mutually acceptable method of collecting valid information.

10. That written information is more reliable, valid, and substantial than verbal information.

Again, a very deep Anglo American value that is not shared by a number of other cultures. If the person gathering the information is writing down what is said, this often reduces credibility with minority cultures. Very bad experiences have resulted from allowing someone from outside the community to write down accurate personal or household information, such as "How many people live in this household?"

For accurate community information to be obtained, trusted community informants need to be engaged in the information collection process. They may need to collect the information without pen in hand and the information may need to be collected in a comfortable place away from the informant's home.

Next Chapter
References

First Chapter

Executive Summary and List of Chapters


McIntosh, P. (1988). *White privilege and male privilege: A personal account of coming to see correspondences through work and women's studies.* (pp. 5-9). Wellesley, MA: Wellesley College Center for Research on Women.


Next Chapter
Bibliography

First Chapter

Executive Summary and List of Chapters
Intercultural Bibliography


Cross-Cultural Communication


### Short Bibliography
**Evaluation of diversity or intercultural training/programs**


Candia Elliott, Diversity Training Associates
R. Jerry Adams, Ph.D., Evaluation and Development Institute
Suganya Sockalingam, Ph.D., Office of Multicultural Health, Department of Human Resources, Oregon
September 31, 1999

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