

## Characteristics Needed to Work Effectively in a Cross-Cultural Setting

Cecily Rodriguez  
Office of Cultural & Linguistic Competence

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## Learning Objectives



- Explore and identify our individual and collective cultures (*Lifeways- Davis and Vakalahi*)
- Define culture and its influence on relationships
- Strategize how individuals and organizations can reinforce effective cross cultural communication

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## What are the artifacts that represent my culture?



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# All about YOU!

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## Recognizing the Lifeways of Your Culture

- We have similarities with others.
- We have differences that are unique to us.
- These differences may have little to do with our ethnicity, age, social class.
- Sometimes the origin of lifeways is unclear.
- Sometimes the rationale for lifeways is unclear.

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## *Lifeways are Reflected at ALL Levels of a Given Society*

- Individuals
- Families
- Organizations
- Communities
- Societies



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## Individual and Family Lifeways

**Individual and family lifeways are manifested in all that you do everyday.**

Think about any holiday and reflect on what you do and why you do it?

How do you communicate most often with friends and family?

What is your favorite food and why?

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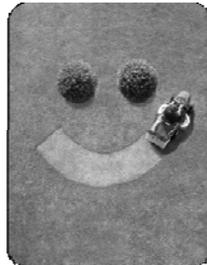
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## Community Lifeways

Think ....

- Lawn care standards
- Interaction with neighbors
- Colors of homes
- Snow storm shoveling behavior
- Death in the community
- Birth of a baby
- Violation of neighborhood standards



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## Organizational Lifeways



Think about....

- Appropriate Dress
- Behavior with superiors
- Interaction with peers
- What do people do on their breaks?
- How are people rewarded?
- How are people reprimanded?

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## Lifeways

- Help us adapt or fit in with our environment;
- Can be transmitted across generations;
- Can be shared or unique;
- Can be changed;
- Exist in multiple levels of systems;
- Are affected by historical and life events;
- Are developmental over time
- Reflected in behavior, customs, beliefs, traditions, rituals, traditions.

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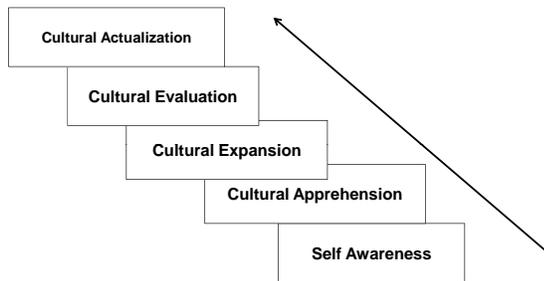
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## Lifeways Cultural Competence Continuum



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## Dimensions of Lifeways



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## Self Awareness

- I believe what my parents taught me about being better than some other groups
- I am uncomfortable with people whose English is difficult to understand
- Some people's cultural traditions seem bizarre to me
- If people speak in a loud voice to me, I get angry
- I have felt prejudice toward some groups of people

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## Cultural Apprehension



Apprehensive response to diversity

- The more different the Lifeways from your own, the more apprehension
- Other groups are considered inferior
- Stereotypes are the basis of beliefs about others groups
- Strong emphasis on comparison.
- May feel a growing awareness of difference may lead to positive or negative outcome.

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## Cultural Expansion



- Expansion of knowledge based upon increased learning and interaction about different cultures and ethnic groups.
- Genuine appreciation of diversity.
- Start to become more comfortable interacting with people with diverse characteristics

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## Cultural Expansion



- I usually learn some new when I interact with different people
- I enjoy spending time with people who don't speak English very well
- I am willing to try a variety of cultural dishes
- I feel uncomfortable in settings with no diversity in people of color

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## Cultural Evaluation

- Comparative evaluation without negative judgment.
- Brings to light the differences to promote growth and better connection with others.
- Increased comfort with and preference for diverse settings and Lifeways
- Begin to explore and accept your own bias

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## Cultural Actualization

- Not ever fully actualized but it is a journey...



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### Cultural Actualization

- Less evaluation of lifeways
- Genuine respect for diverse lifeways
- Desire to learn about diverse lifeways
- Willingness to embrace differences

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### Concept of Proversity

Term coined by Lawrence Graham

Progressive Diversity-

*While diversity focuses on what makes us different—be it race, age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or religion—Proversity does just the opposite: it looks for the things we all have in common.*

**Is this cultural actualization?**

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### Communication as Culture

**Is the vehicle by which culture is expressed**

- VIDEO



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## Importance of Context

"Communication is a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior" (Webster, 1983, p. 266).

### Communication can be:

- **High Context** - uses implied meanings which arise from the setting
- **Low Context** - focuses on literal meanings of words, independent of setting

*\* Note: this distinction does not describe a dichotomy, but rather poles on a continuum.*

### Everyone engages in both, depending on:

- The relationships involved
- The situation
- The purpose of communication



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## Context Differences

**Low-context communicators** dealing with **high-context communicators** should remember:

- Nonverbal messages/gestures are important
- Status and identity may be communicated nonverbally
- Face-saving and tact are important
- Building a good relationship may be essential
- Indirect routes and creative thinking may be important



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## Context Differences

**High-context communicators** dealing with **low-context communicators** should remember:

- Statements may be taken at face value
- Roles and functions may be decoupled from status
- A sustained focus on tasks may be necessary
- Direct questions are not meant to offend
- Indirect cues may be ineffectual



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## Community/Autonomy

Cultures differ as to the degree of emphasis placed on **community** versus **individual autonomy**

### In Communitarian Settings

- People see themselves as part of a circle of relationships
- Identity is as a member of a group
- In conflict, response is chosen jointly



### In Individualistic Settings

- People see themselves as independent and autonomous
- Identity is individual
- In conflict, response is individual



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## Community/Autonomy

### In Communitarian Settings

- Maintaining group harmony and cohesion is important
- Choices are made in consultation
- People are part of a hierarchy
- People are accountable to the group



### In Individualistic Settings

- Achievement involves individual goal-setting and action
- Everyone is capable of making their own choices
- People are autonomous
- People are accountable to themselves

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## Sources of Cultural Conflict

- Cultural differences
- Pressure to assimilate
- Power imbalance
- Competing values
- Short-term pressures versus long-term pressure
- Differing perceptions, values, cultural norms
- Ambiguous jurisdictions; lack of clarity; competition for limited resources



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## Microaggressions

Proposed by psychiatrist Chester M. Pierce, MD, in the 1970s.

**It is the idea that specific interactions between those of different cultures or genders can be interpreted as non-physical aggression.**

- In the 1990's- Dr Derald Wing Sue identified-
- Microassaults- checking the ID of a Latino person and not a White one.
  - Microinsults- How did YOU get this job?
  - Microinvalidation- You speak English really well.

These incidents may appear small, banal and trivial, but we're beginning to find they assail the mental health of recipients," Sue says.

**Mountain or a molehill?**

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## Privilege



- An unearned advantage given because a person is born into a certain group in society.
- White privilege, male privilege, class privilege, heterosexual privilege are examples.
- McIntosh: "Privilege is a package of unearned assets that members of privileged groups can count on cashing in on every day."

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## White Privilege

- If I should need to move, I can be pretty sure renting or purchasing housing in an area which I can afford and in which I would want to live.
- I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group.
- I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.
- I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race.

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## Cultural Manifestations of Disability

### American Macro Culture

- Sees disability caused by medical problems or physical trauma during pregnancy
- Assumes it is best to “do something” about the disability. The focus is on improving the situation
- Response to disability is to provide treatment and research.

### Micro/Immigrant Culture

- Sees disability as caused by a spiritual crisis (blessing or punishment). May blame some action like a “susto”
- May take a “wait and see” approach. They may feel that the disability is there for a purpose and should not try to cure it.
- May respond through prayer, talisman, rebalancing of the body (through food or drink). Use acupuncture or ceremonies to deal with or heal the disability.

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## What is a Culturally Competent Professional?



A culturally competent professional is one who seeks to understand the lifeways of diverse clients and is able to use knowledge, skills and values to enhance individual functioning, utilizing interventions that are compatible with client system lifeways.

Davis, 2003

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## Cultural and Linguistic Competence Means..

***Attitude+***  
***Knowledge+Skill***  
**=**  
***Competency***

Kaiser Permanente Health Plans, Inc.  
National Linguistic & Cultural Programs, National Diversity

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### Attitudes

- 1 • Recognizing that this is a lifelong commitment to learning
- 2 • A commitment to equal quality of care for all and fairness in the health care setting.
- 3 • Proactivity in our practice environments to eliminate those inequities.

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National Linguistic & Cultural Programs, National Diversity  
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### Knowledge- Checking Yourself

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### Skills

Ability to continually assess our own responses, bias, and cultural preconceptions

Ability to realistically assess our own language proficiency

Ability to use interpreters effectively

Ability to foster a positive therapeutic alliance with diverse consumers through effective communication

Ability to assess consumer's language skills as they relate to their ability to communicate fully with the provider

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## SALAM

**S**- Stating the conflicting view

**A**- agreeing that a conflict exists without making any judgment.

**L**- Listening for and learning the difference

**A**- Advising one another

**M**- minimizing areas of disagreement. Seek agreement in as many aspects of the conflict as possible, thereby minimizing the areas where there is disagreement.

Dr. Iqbal Unus, [International Institute of Islamic Thought](http://www.iiit.org/)

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## Team Approach to Conflict Prevention and Resolution

1. Know yourself and your own culture

2. Learn others expectations

3. Check your assumptions

4. When in Rome...ask questions

5. Consider the Platinum rule-  
*"Treat others in the way they like to be treated."*

6. All conflict is multi-cultural



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