

A Workshop Series for Faculty and Staff

You are the Bridge- Closing Intercultural Gaps Effectively



Dr. Cal Downs will facilitate all sessions. He is an internationally known intercultural communication expert who has conducted training in over 20 countries. He is an author and retired Kansas University Professor. (Come to all three sessions, two or only one — depending on your schedule)

- Session I-Blueprint of a Bridge: Your Cultural Identity-Thurs. Sept. 18, 2:30-5:00pm
- Session II-Building the Bridge: Points of Contact—Thurs. Oct. 9 2:30-5:00pm
- Session III-Being the Bridge: Refining Your Skills -Thurs. Nov. 13, 2:30-5:00pm

ALL SESSIONS HELD IN
WOODARD CONFERENCE CENTER

WORKBOOK SESSION II

Building the Bridge: Points of Contact

**YOU ARE THE BRIDGE -- CLOSING
INTERCULTURAL GAPS EFFECTIVELY**

**Facilitator
Cal W. Downs, PhD**

YOU ARE THE BRIDGE -- CLOSING INTERCULTURAL GAPS EFFECTIVELY,

INTRODUCTION

The need to be culturally strategic continually grows. Since Park University has students from 112 countries, this training program for faculty and staff to call attention to information that would assist them in their intercultural interactions. The following proposal is drafted on the basis provided in several meetings with Kimberly Connelly. I am impressed with what Park U. is seeking to accomplish and appreciate the opportunity to work with the Internationalization Task Force in accomplishing its goals.

Cal Downs, PhD

An international management consultant as well as being professor emeritus at the University of Kansas Communications Department, Cal Downs has more than 30 years experience as a trainer. He also has held senior positions in communications at the University of Maryland and Northwestern University.

Starting his career conducting cross-cultural training programs for the Agency for International Development in Washington, D.C., he has worked with many European, Australian and Asian companies across a wide range of managerial and cultural issues with special seminars in Russia, Italy, China, the Netherlands, and Australia. For many years he was a trainer in management communication at the University of Michigan Executive Training Center and the UCLA's Engineering Management Course. He enjoys developing questionnaires for Communication Management, Inc, and his COMSAT questionnaire is one of the most thoroughly researched in the world and is translated into several languages.

General program objectives

- **To increase the communications effectiveness of employees in their dealings with customers and contacts from overseas countries**
- **To assess individual behavior style as it relates to working with overseas customers or contacts from different cultures and to appreciate the “dimensions of difference” between working and social outlooks in the US from those of other countries**
- **To examine the negative consequences of “cultural blindness” on current and potential working relationships**
- **To sensitize participants to how communication is culturally contextual and to give them some tools for making strategic decisions.**

- **To lay a foundation for on-going development for effectiveness in inter-cultural communications**
- **To examine oneself as a cultural being---as well as an individual within a culture.**

TRAINING METHODS

The seminar will be highly interactive, combining

- a) theories about points of contact,**
- b) cases and conversations and**
- c) experiences from the participants.**

Participants will be asked to prepare an assignment for sessions 2 and 3 to facilitate our maximum understanding.

BENEFITS TO THE ORGANIZATION

- * **Increased Financial Stability for Park**
Organizations that manage cultural understanding and adapt effectively can expect to increase business through improved communications, reaching consensus on both sides and boosting executives' confidence in dealing with overseas business.
- * **Better Service to Overseas Customers/Clients**
Overseas customers/clients require the same quality of service provided to everyone. However, communications, delivery and/or implementation will require different approaches. Experts have shown that by managing cultural awareness effectively, organizations can meet the needs of a diverse customer/client thus providing better service.
- * **Reduced Conflict/Improved Morale**
Conflict occurs when two sides misunderstand each other's motives. This often happens within the same "transnational" company with its integrated management approach treating worldwide operations as an interdependent whole. Too often the differences in working practices are not understood or appreciated. The muscle of global resources must be combined with sensitivity to local practices, issues and opportunities.
- **Your Own Personal Growth**
- **Our goals is understanding (Adrian)**
 - 1. Information is when you can say it.**
 - 2. Knowledge is when you can do it.**
 - 3. Understanding is when you can teach it.**

SESSION TWO

INTRODUCTION. Please write out one question, which you would like to have answered during the sessions that we have on intercultural communication.

CULTURAL IDENTITIES INTERACTING

1. Cultures are abstract and complex, constantly undergoing changes

Hesselgrave lists their ingredients as being

- 1. World Views---ways of perceiving the world**
- 2. Cognitive Processes---ways of thinking**
- 3. Linguistic Forms---ways of structuring a message**
- 4. Behavioral Patterns----ways of behaving**
- 5. Social Structures----ways of interacting**
- 6. Media Influences----ways of channeling the message**
- 7. Motivational Resources---ways of deciding.**

List one descriptor for American culture for each of Hesselgrave's dimensions.

SOME BASIC TENSIONS

- 1. In comparing cultures, there is great tension between HONORING one's own culture and appreciating other cultures, perhaps even embracing some aspects of them.**

What are the tensions? Why do they occur?

A Chinese textbook on intercultural communication asks the following question. Many people in America blame the Chinese for the trade imbalance. Do you think it is fair for [Americans](#) to blame the Chinese?

How many similar questions about world interactions could we identify?

2. Obvious similarities make subtle differences hard to detect? Why?

A. We like to focus on the obvious, such as types of Greetings

- 1. Types of Greetings**
 - a. Shake hands**
 - b. Bow**
 - c. Kiss on cheek**
 - d. Kiss on two or three cheeks**
 - e. Holding hands**
 - f. Fist bump**
- 2. Eye contact**
- 3. Tone of Voice**
- 4. Group vs. Individual Behavior**
- 5. Use of Language Ex: Chinese “yes” vs. American “yes”**
- 6. _____**

B. That which is not obvious may be hard to discern.

“In almost everything in Japan there is some unseen or unstated meaning which is usually not pointed out but which everybody is supposed to know. So my advice is to look for the underlying meanings.” John Condon

Are there things like that in US culture? If so, how can we help foreign students understand them?

C. Americans tend to think in terms of universals. What is true in the USA should be true everywhere. “Culture” is considered to be an overlay of arbitrary customs and procedures found in other countries.

In fact, many Americans (as do citizens of some other countries) may deny that the US even has a culture.

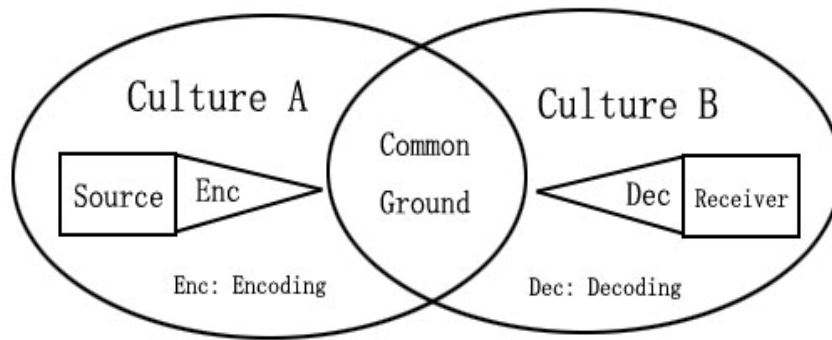
Within USA culture, one sees such great variances that some of us feel are hard to generalize.

Individual Americans may think they chose their own values, rather than having had their values and the assumptions on which they are based imposed on them by the society in which they were born. (Gary Althen. American Ways)

- 3. One of the great challenges is to learn to work with cultural ideas rather than fighting them. Resistance comes when there is a win-lose competition. Why?**

- 4. How can we foster cultural literacy and avoid judging an entire culture by just a few characteristics?**

- 5. Remember: Learning to analyze is not living.**



ACCURATE PERCEPTION OF VALUES

- a. **Different cultures have many differences but also many commonalities.**
- b. **In some cultures, our concept of PRIVACY is not known or valued.**
- c. **The meaning of FAMILY VALUES differs.**
- d. **Paying money to receive FAVORS has different values.**
- e. **What people value about communication differs.**
 - USA communicate to exchange information
 - Chinese communicate to preserve harmony
 - Mexicans communicate to maintain relationships
 - Germans communicate to find truth
- f. **Perceptions of freedom differ. Foreign visitors often think the constraints Americans impose on themselves by means of their rules are excessive. This is the antithesis of freedom in their views.**

DIALOGUE ABOUT AMERICA

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Professor Smith: Now that we have covered some of the things that you like about American life, what are some aspects that make you uncomfortable or that you do not like?

Mohammed (from Saudi Arabia): I think there is too much freedom here.

Professor Smith: Would you tell us where you think there is too much freedom?

Mohammed: Well, too much misinformation is spread. People say things and write things in the newspaper that just are not true.

Katje (from Russia): Well, in my view, there is not enough freedom here. Americans keep telling themselves they are free, and they sing about being free; but frankly, I don't see the freedom. You have too many laws.

Raj (from India): I agree. You Americans are crazy. There are 300 million of you. Yet, someone in the US will do something you don't like and you make a rule for everyone.

Mary (from America): Well, we ARE free and we believe that we are a nation of laws. The two are not incompatible.

COMMUNICATION

A. Language

1. **Similar words which are treated very differently in different languages.**
 - a. **Spiritual**
 - b. **Macho**
 - c. **Consensus**
 - d. **Intellectual**

2. **There are many concepts for which there are no adequate definitions in other languages. Yet, most of us Americans have been taught we understand the concept if we can define it in other words.**
 - a. **Face**
 - b. **Agape**
 - c. **Organizational Commitment**
 - d. **Gradations of being not satisfied**
 - e. **Levels of living together**
 - f. **Dreaming**

3. Why is this observation important?

4. America is a low context culture so words matter to us in a way that they may not to other cultures.

Eyes tell you true feelings better than your words. Japanese proverb.

A wise man thinks all that he says; a fool says all that he thinks.

5. The challenge for foreigners from a high context culture is how to adapt to a low context culture.

A. Contracts

B. Exhaustive Support

C. Faith in Words—say it just right and one cannot misunderstand.

B. Directness vs. Indirectness

1. More than any other characteristic, Americans are labeled as being direct, frank, and aggressive.

- a. Tell it like it is.
- b. Don't beat around the bush.
- c. Put all your cards on the table.
- d. Get to the point.
- e. Tell them what you are going to tell them, tell them, tell them what you have told them----and shut up.
- f. Put it in writing.

2. By contrast, indirect cultures think such directness is rude.

- a. Use understatement
- b. Agree with a statement you feel is wrong to save face.
- c. Ask the boss's opinion even though you are the expert.
- d. Expect listeners/ readers to be aware of what you are saying even though the words are not saying it.
- e. Do not disagree or criticize openly.
- f. Use total context for meaning.
- g. Do not express feelings and thoughts directly; what they say seems ambiguous. Cannot understand meaning by looking only at their words.

3. **Change the following from direct feedback to indirect feedback.**
In a business situation, a boss says, “This report is incomplete. "I can't give it to the direct. It needs more work.
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4. **Silence as a communication strategy.**

COMMUNICATION THROUGH PRESENTATION

Copyright by Allyson Adrian

MICHAEL: So, Mohamed. I couldn't get a good reading on Mr. Malik's response. How did we do?

MOHOMED: Oh, Mr. Malik was impressed. Very Impressed. Your marked analysis was very thorough and your presentation was clear and precise. A very balanced, objective presentation.

MICHAEL: Well, the whole team really did our homework. The statistics really tell the story; they're very convincing. And I don't see how anyone could really buy in to them.

MOHOMED: Yes, there were many statistics.

MICHAEL: But I feel funny about this one. Something's missing. I could not read his responses. I'm not sure he's going to sign with us.

MOHOMED: I think he may have felt there was something missing, that we're not very eager for his business.

MICHAEL: I don't know what else I could have done. I analyzed everything backward and forwards for this presentation. If he doesn't buy it, I'm sorry. But the facts really speak for themselves in this case. You just cannot deny that.

JAPANESE COMPLAINT

Ting-Toomey & Chung 2005: 172-173

MRS. KUROGI: Hello, Mrs. Yamashita. Your son Toji is entering his high school karaoke contest, is not he? I envy you, because you must be so proud of his talent. You must be looking forward to his future as a pop singer.... I'm really impressed by his enthusiasm—every day, he practices so hard, for hours and hours, until late at night....

MRS. YAMASHITA: Oh, I'm sorry. Toji is just a beginner in karaoke singing. We do not know his future yet. He is such a silly boy singing so late. We didn't realize you could hear all the noise next door. I'll tell him to stop right away. I'm so sorry about all your trouble, it won't happen again.

CHECKING ADEQUACY OF A REPORT

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Mary Jones: What did you think of the rough draft of our report?

Bill Yu, the boss: I found it quite interesting.

Mary: Quite interesting?

Bill: Yes.

Mary: So you think it is ok?

Bill: Yes. There's one section that needs to be revised a little, but that's about it.

Mary: I see.

Bill: What about that other report you were working on? Any chance I could see it soon?

Mary: We can make it a priority, if you'd like.

Bill: Great. Thanks.

Mary: So what do you want us to do with the draft?

Bill: (What do you think he might say?)

1. LANGUAGE REVIEW

A. What do you know?

B. How does this affect you?

C. In what ways can you adapt your behavior? Are you willing to do so?

D. How can you help others adapt to the culture at Park?

RELATIONSHIPS

A. Power/ Friend Relationship Confusion.

- 1. Informality**
- 2. Expect Reciprocity**

B. Friendships.

- 1. Foreign students often feel isolated, lonely, and confused when they do not understand how Americans act in relationships.**
- 2. Basis of friendships may be very different.**
 - a. Example: Agreement**
 - b. Segmentation**
 - c. Depth of friendship**
 - d. Expectations**

C. Individualism vs Collectivism

- 1. Approach to education. Ex. Japanese vs American schoolchildren**
- 2. Family considerations**
- 3. See everything competitively, a game to be won.**
- 4. Talk cooperation and teamwork but reward individual merit**

2. RULES AND RELATIONSHIPS REVIEW

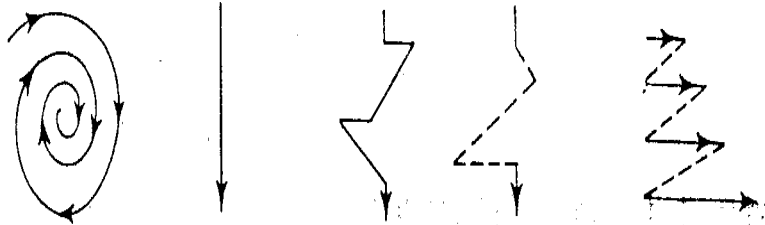
A. What do you know?

B. How does this affect you?

C. In what ways can you adapt? How can you help others adapt?

WAYS OF KNOWING

汉语与朝语 英语 拉丁语 俄语 闪米特语



A. How do people show they know something?

B. Americans view communication as an exchange of information directed toward some “point” backed up with evidence, fact, statistics, and logical explanation. Conclusions should exist independently of the person.

C. Others rely on:

- a. Stories---Africans and others
- b. Emotions and subjective considerations--Latin
- c. General abstractions---In Zen truth cannot even be expressed in words; it comes from silent meditation.
- d. Some Europeans would not expect to tell professors anything they are already expected to know.

WAYS OF KNOWING REVIEW

What do you know?

How does this affect you?

In what ways can you adapt? How can you help others adapt?

STUDY ABROAD SEX INCIDENT IN ITALY

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Betty was a junior study abroad student in Italy, her first foreign experience. She traveled in Europe at every opportunity, and it was on a Greek island that she lost her virginity. Back in Italy she was a good student, but she also was enjoying her new freedom of drinking, partying with other Americans, and some sex. Among her classmates was Ricardo, a handsome young man from South America who was an outstanding dancer projecting great sensuality with his moves.

One night Betty partied so much that she was completely drunk. Going back to her room early, she went to bed while her friends were still out. Ricardo knocked on her door, and was invited inside, where they had sex. Then he left. Later he returned to her door, knocked, and was invited inside where they had sex again. The next morning Betty knew that she had had sex, but she could not remember with whom. However, a friend had seen Ricardo leave her room.

A group of American female friends immediately charged him with rape and began to clamor for a charge against Ricardo. The administrators took Betty to a doctor who could find no evidence of bruising, damage, or force. Ricardo maintained that the sex was consensual and that she had invited him inside both times. Nevertheless, the women pursued their cause, got Betty's parents involved, and also solicited help from the administration of the American university. They wanted him charged and disciplined. Suddenly, Ricardo was isolated by both men and women students as the tension went on for days. However, under Italian law and ethics he could not be charged, and the local head of the Study Abroad program could not punish him. One professor saw what was happening and made opportunities to interact with him. Eventually, he finished the term there without charges.

Mary Smith from New Orleans: "I just don't understand how this could happen. It is such a miscarriage of justice."

Angelina, an Italian assistant officer manager: In Italy, we frown on drunkenness. And everyone knows that if you get drunk, you are responsible for what happens."

Mary: "Well, I think that is a pretty preposterous position. How can you, as a woman, even think like that?"

Angelina: I don't think you are thinking as a woman. I think you are thinking as an American woman---in Italy.

What can we learn cultural perceptions and conflict from this case?

Egyptian Case: Relationship Reciprocity

Margaret Nydal

I once talked to an Egyptian university student who told me that he was very disappointed in his American professor. The professor had gratefully accepted many favors while he was getting settled in Egypt, including assistance in finding a maid and buying furniture. When the Egyptian asked him to use his influence in helping him obtain a graduate fellowship in the United States, the professor told him that there was no point in trying because his grades were not high enough to be competitive. The Egyptian took this as a personal affront and felt bitter that the professor did not care about him enough to help him work toward a better future. The more appropriate cross-cultural response by the professor would have been to make helpful gestures, for example, helping the student obtain information about fellowships, assisting him with applications, and offering encouragement – even if he was not optimistic about the outcome.

If you fail to carry out a request, you will notice that no matter how hopeful your Arab friends was that you would succeed, he or she will probably accept your regrets graciously without asking precisely why the favor could not be done (which could embarrass you and possibly force you to admit a failure). You should be willing to show the same forbearance and understanding in inquiring about one of your requests. This is one of the most frustrating cultural patterns Westerners confront in the Arab world.

INVITATION TO DINNER

Copyright by Cal W. Downs, 2008
commgt@yahoo.com

• *Chuck is a friendly American who volunteers to work in a conversational English program for foreign students at a university. He enjoys making friends with foreign students and is open to discussions of their cultures. Two years ago he worked with Saud from Saudi Arabia. Saud introduced Chuck to his nephew Mohammed, a 24-year-old student from Saudi Arabia with a wife and 2 children with him. Mohammed and his wife Sara are cousins, since their mothers are sisters. When they met, Chuck liked him immediately and offered to have coffee with him once a week just to discuss Mohammed's experiences and help him with his English. After having coffee for weeks, Chuck decided he knew Mohammed well enough to invite him for dinner in his home.*

•

Part A. Chuck and Mohammed

- Chuck:** Mohammed, I really enjoy our conversations, and I wondered if you would come to dinner in our home.
- Mohammed:** I would enjoy that very much.
- Chuck:** And bring your wife and children. We would enjoy knowing them, too.
- Mohammed:** uuuhhh...., that would be nice. But my wife would be uncomfortable eating at the same table with you.
- Chuck:** What do you mean?
- Mohammed:** Well, she has never eaten with another man present outside our family. She would want to eat in a separate room, maybe with your wife.
- Chuck:** (What should be his response?)

Part: B. Husband Wife Exchange

- Chuck:** Marsha, I asked Mohammed if he would come to dinner as we discussed.
- Marsha:** What did he say?
- Chuck:** Well, he seemed interested, but he said his wife would be uncomfortable eating at the table with another man. They will come if you will eat with her in a separate room.
- Marsha:** Well, maybe I would do that if we were in Saudi Arabia. But this is my home, in the United States, in the 21st century. After all, I am a professional woman who has been around foreign students a lot. And I cannot believe that you would ask me to do this.

•**Chuck:.....**

Alternative Response

•**Marsha:** Well, that is ok with me. We'll just move a card table to the doorway, put the food on it, and have access from either room. I will enjoy visiting with her, and maybe respecting their feelings might have an impact on them. I have to tell you that I would not do this all the time though.

Part C: Chuck and Mohammed

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INFORMALITY

Kimberly Connelly

An American who teaches English as a Second Language to international students has a very affectionate way of interacting with people. She calls everyone sweetie and honey no matter what the student or coworker's age. One of her students drops by her office often just to talk. She knows that he misses home and needs a friend. One time as he is leaving, she says, "Thanks for stopping by, sweetie." And he responds, "I'll see you tomorrow honey." The teacher is embarrassed.

THE TERM PAPER

Copyright: Cal W. Downs, 2008

Mario, a Latin American student, had recently started his graduate program in the USA. Having been awarded a scholarship to attend the university, he was quite confident of his ability to excel in the very competitive study. And from the very beginning, people were friendly and he enjoyed living in Middle America. He studied enthusiastically during the week even though he occasionally wished he could be partying with his friends. . The material, heavily footnoted, seemed to emphasize a lot of quantitative data from which the authors drew conclusions. This was different than the material in his undergraduate study, which emphasized looking at world events philosophically. He had been taught that the quantitative facts were always changing, and if you relied on them over a several year period, you could get into a frozen evaluation from the past that did not represent the present.

In one international class, he chose to write on the World Trade Organization. In the paper he wrote briefly about the history and organization of the WTA, but most of the paper described some of the philosophical principles: the integrity of national sovereignty, decision making processes not based on precedent, cultural imperialism, market fairness, and power of the developed countries over the developing countries.

In the class period when the papers were to be returned to the students, the professor used excerpts from his paper to show other students what NOT to do. Furthermore, the professor said that he had stopped reading it after awhile because it was too abstract and theoretical and had little to do with the practical world of the WTO. Mario was disconcerted to be evaluated so openly and directly before he had gotten any feedback.

In a private meeting later, the professor said, “That’s just pure philosophical meandering, and it has little to do with what really happens. You have to learn to think practically, write succinctly, and stay with the facts. ” After pausing, he said, “But I will give you another chance if you want to write another paper and hand it in within a week.” Mario thought: “How can I do this in a week?”

EXERCISE: ADAPTATION TO USA CULTURE AT PARK

A. Organizational Cultures vary a lot even within a national culture. List the 5 most significant aspects of Park culture from your perspective. For example, how does the fact that it is an entrepreneurial organization influence its culture?

1.

2.

3.

4.

B. From your experience what are the 5 greatest challenges for foreigners to adapt to life in the United States, particularly at Park?

1.

2.

3.

4.

C. What strategies can you devise to assist in their adaptation?

1.

2.

3.

4.

D. What strategies can you devise to assist you to adapt to them?

1.

2.

3.

4.
