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Learning Together: A Cultural Approach to Community Development

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Learning Together:

A Cultural Approach to Community Development

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Introduction

In writing this manual, we hope to help practitioners in all areas of community development and education assist the growing numbers of newcomer groups (refugees and immigrants) in the United States and other countries adapt to their new environment. Fundamental to this goal is our desire to equip newcomers with the “cultural tools” they need to function within American society while still preserving their traditional culture. In addition, we wish to aid practitioners in learning about the specific circumstances and issues important to these groups in order to serve them more responsibly and effectively.

A Focus On Culture

Culture is the underlying concept unifying the manual and, for our purposes, can be loosely defined as the way of life of a particular group of people developed in response to pre-existing, eternal conditions. Much of what is presented here is done with an eye to helping practitioners become aware of their own culture, as well as the cultures of the various groups with whom they work, and the culture of the society at large. In addition, we wish to help newcomer groups interpret their experience in terms of their own culture undergoing transition. Developing cultural awareness and an understanding of the process of cross-cultural adaptation are central themes. These ideas are then applied to more mainstream community development processes like communication, conflict resolution, decision making, and leadership styles. Using exercises, scenarios, and examples, we offer ways the practitioner can develop culturally-appropriate interventions.

Who The Writers Are

We embrace a certain political and social perspective. We desire to promote democratic, participatory methods for use with newcomer groups, as well as to make the practitioner aware of times when American culture is neither democratic nor participatory. We desire to promote equal participation of all groups of people, regardless of difference, and to promote a pluralistic society by encouraging the various social and ethnic groups to maintain their individual identities. We believe it is possible to do this and still maintain a common vision; that the forces that hold people together are as strong as those that divide them. We also believe that much of this is not possible unless social change occurs. One way to bring about change is to reveal the underlying power structure of the country and to challenge it. We hope in its small way that the manual succeeds in doing this.
Who Is The Manual For?

Newcomer Groups

The manual is first and foremost for newcomer groups. We focus on them because of the increasingly important role they play in this country as the traditional European American population diminishes in comparison to other ethnicities. In addition, we believe the future peaceful coexistence of the world hinges on encouraging pluralism. We therefore encourage newcomers to preserve their cultural heritage rather than to assimilate American culture. Newcomers, in a word, are today's challenge to the traditional concept of the melting pot. No longer is it enough to say immigrants should adopt the culture of their new country. We live in an increasingly small and diverse world where no one culture is better than another. Tolerance for difference is certainly a basic key to survival, but more importantly, sharing and celebrating these differences will lead to richer, more creative opportunities for all people.

The manual is directed at newcomer groups comprised of one ethnic culture, rather than at multi-cultural ones. At the same time, we recognize and address that within any specific newcomer culture diversity exists: varying degrees of cross-cultural adaptation will be present in different members, as well as variations according to social groups and demographics.

Practitioners

This manual is also for practitioners, by which we mean by all people working in community development and education, or who are seeking new solutions for the growing numbers of America's poor and disenfranchised. Though it is directed at current newcomers rather than other disenfranchised groups such as African and Native Americans, practitioners working with these groups will certainly find much that is applicable. Since the manual was written in the United States in context of American culture, it also is somewhat directed at a domestic American readership.

Role of the Practitioner

In using the word "practitioner," we have chosen what we hope is a neutral term encompassing a number of different roles. Practitioners can be community development providers, trainers, or consultants to their groups. Yet we have shied away from using these terms because of the implication of expertise, that it is we who are bringing "answers" to the group, rather than encouraging the group's self-determination. Certainly some groups who are already considerably empowered may hire us exactly in that capacity. But we are most comfortable in the role of facilitator, helping the group discover its own strengths and priorities. Teacher and
learner are two roles that we alternate between: by sharing experience and knowledge, both sides learn from and teach each other. Lastly, we use the term "change agent" to capture the political component of our work. Social change does not come about by accident. The end result of empowering the disempowered will have large political implications for the United States.

**Structure of the Manual**

We have chosen to organize the manual around a number of issues rather than as a step-by-step guide. Part I, "A Cultural Framework," is the reader's introduction to the two concepts we consider necessary to any practitioner's work with other cultures: cultural awareness and the process of cross-cultural adaptation. Part II, "Community Development Processes," presents standard community development processes using the cultural lens introduced in Part I. Each chapter throughout the manual can be read independently or in conjunction with others.

Though we intend the manual as a practical guide, we wished to provide enough theory to give the reader a thorough understanding of the issues that arise when two cultures interact. These real-life issues are complex, intertwined, and stubbornly resistant to simple solutions. Exercises, check-lists, and other inventories are useful but limiting. Armed with conceptual knowledge, practitioners can take simple suggestions and alter them to fit the unique conditions in which they find themselves.

**Exercises**

We offer numerous exercises, some directed at the practitioner, some at the newcomer group, and some at both. Some will be familiar; others are non-traditional and non-western. If you like them, use them. Change them as you wish according to the specific culture and community of the group with which you are working.

**Examples & Scenarios**

Nothing in the manual gave us more difficulty than coming up with appropriate examples. It seemed that every example of a cultural trait could be disproved by numerous exceptions or experiences. Nothing showed us more
definitively how complex and changing culture is and how impossible it is to pin
down. Yet we don't think anyone reasonably disputes that cultures are different.
Therefore, we took the liberty of attributing certain traits, world views, beliefs, etc.,
to certain ethnicities and nationalities. We found such generalizations clarified the
ways cultures differed from each other. At the same time, we are acutely aware of
how quickly generalizations turn into stereotypes. In the manual, we try to use
them as tools only, helpful in thinking out some issues, but by no means the last
word in categorizing or comprehensively defining any specific culture.
PART I:

A Cultural Framework
CHAPTER 1

Developing Cultural Awareness

Every newcomer group has a way of life that gives them a sense of who they are and how they should behave. They act and react according to basic cultural assumptions, beliefs, and values of their society and organize and construct their community based on social structures and traditions. Before beginning to work with such groups, we as practitioners must consider what we know of them and what our role will be. It is extremely important that we learn about the group's ethnic and local culture, particularly those key aspects that have a major impact in the practice of community development.

In doing so, we might find that certain styles of leadership or community organizing that we encourage in our work with newcomers are in conflict with the culture of the group. Unconsciously, we might be imposing our own values and ethics on people different from ourselves without taking into account that what is accepted, normal, and helpful in one culture may be useless or harmful in another. For example, the highly prized qualities of personal freedom and individuality in the United States would be a liability among any peoples depending on community cooperation for survival. In writing this series, however, we believe cultural differences not only determine how practitioners interact with different groups, but enrich the learning and sharing of all involved. Our cultural awareness becomes then a critical aspect of our relationship to the newcomer community with whom we work.

What is Culture?

There is no universal definition of culture. It has been defined in many ways because the categories used to define it are culturally dependent. For our purpose here, culture is the way of life of a particular group of people developed in response to pre-existing, external conditions. It involves social relations, which are learned and passed down and which give individuals a sense of identity, direction, and belonging. Culture also gives individuals their world view or shared interpretation of reality, and brings meaning to the values and ideas implicit in the group's institutions, social structure, mores, and artifacts. These shared meanings shape the group's way of life, yet the group can also transform them to develop new social relations, new meanings, and eventually a new culture.

Culture is transmitted through the process of socialization, where the elements of culture are passed from one generation to the next. New generations learn the cultural "agreements" from generations preceding them; once these agreements are internalized, external reinforcements are no longer necessary. Through socialization, individuals develop a culturally-defined world view and sense of identity.
In this series, we use the notion of culture to explore differences among cultural groups and to explore the dynamics of cultural change in newcomer communities. When we talk about culture, we will be referring to characteristics of a group or groups of people who are different from each other because of national origin, language, religion, customs, and physical features.

In the following sections, we examine the concept of culture from two perspectives to help us understand how newcomers adjust and adapt to their new environment. The first perspective views culture as a system of meaning, where beliefs and values held by people and reflected in their artifacts and institutions influence how they act, think, and feel. The second perspective focuses on culture as a social structure where beliefs, values, and behaviors are woven together in predictable patterns.
Culture as a System of Meaning

Every culture has its own way of interpreting and making meaning of the world. Cultural interpretations are expressed through the way language is structured, through beliefs and values, through expected behavior, and through common symbols (such as flags and hearts).

Agreements

Cultural interpretations can be thought of as a collection of agreements, shared by a group of people, that define what is true and what is good, as well as what kinds of behavior are expected. For example, in American society, we agree that telling the truth, wearing clothes, washing hands before eating, living in houses, valuing paper money, fighting for individual rights, and believing in equality are good, worthwhile behaviors.

Many of these agreements seem so natural, so right, that we don’t even think about them. Agreements, after all, make the existence of groups possible by helping individual members get along, communicate more easily and know what to expect, and ultimately, provide predictable guidelines of behavior.

As people find different patterns of living, new agreements are established and passed down. At the same time, older ones continue to be maintained, changing only slowly over time. As a result, although any culture will exhibit general patterns upon which people have agreed, not everyone necessarily shares all the same patterns. Specific groups (such as Catholics, baseball teams, Democrats, Asian-Americans, etc.) may have particular values shared only by their members. For example, the ritual of Sunday mass may bring an experience of transcendent union to Catholics and others who share similar beliefs. Yet all Americans—Catholics and non-Catholics—might agree that citizens have the right and duty to vote.

World Views

Taken as a whole, these agreements give meaning to our lives and form the basis of our world view. World views are the unspoken assumptions by which we live and include assumptions concerning the basic nature of people and of time. As such, they influence every aspect of life, from how we perceive ourselves to the meaning we make of our interaction with others. Although highly simplified, the following chart depicts a range of world views present in various cultures.
### Culture and World View

#### Human-Nature
- People are evil
- People are a mixture of good and evil
- People are good

*People can't be trusted—they're evil and unchangeable.*
*"You have to check people out to know if they are good or evil."*
*"There is good in everyone; evil comes from problems and socialization."*

#### Man-Nature Relationship
- No control over nature or self
- Living in harmony with nature
- Control over nature, self determination

*"Life is determined by external forces. You can't surpass the conditions life has set for you."*
*"We depend on nature, so people should try to live in harmony with it. We are one small part of the universe."*
*"We can control nature and make it work for us."*

#### Time Sense
- Focus on past
- Focus on present
- Focus on future

*"The past determines who we are. People need to learn from and respect history."*
*"Make the most of today, don't worry about tomorrow."*
*"What are your career goals?"*

#### Activity
- Focus on existence, being
- Focus on inner self
- Focus on outer accomplishments

*"It's enough just to be. You don't have to accomplish great things to have a worthwhile life."*
*"Work brings rewards, but don't neglect self reflection and inner development."*
*"If people work hard their efforts will be rewarded."*

#### Social Relations
- Focus on hierarchy, fixed roles
- Focus on community
- Focus on individual

*"Some people are born to lead, most were born to follow. Go to your superiors if you have a problem."*
*"People exist in relationship to each other and help each other out."*
*"Self-expression, individual accomplishment and freedom are most important in life."

---

When working with ethnic groups, it is important to recognize these differences in world view in order to understand the group and to avoid conflict. World views reflect the way people interact with each other. For example, a society that values life experience as the main source of knowledge will probably have intergenerational relationships based on respect and obedience to elders which is transmitted from generation to generation. As another example, a culture that values hereditary leadership will probably have a political system based on monarchy. In such a culture behaviors like smiling, eye contact, and acceding to demands will define the social reactions between those who have power and those who do not.

The Belief Continuum:

The following example of citizen participation illustrates the relationship of gradations of belief and behavior, from abstract world view at one end to individual behavior at the other.

World view of human nature:
People are a mixture of good and evil. (If everybody has the opportunity to participate in society, group control will allow that the best qualities in people will show and the worst qualities to be controlled.)

Belief:
God created all people with equal worth. (If everybody is equal, everybody should have the opportunity to participate in governing a country.)

Value:
Democracy is the preferred form of government. (For democracy to work, all people should participate.)

Norm or Expected Behavior:
Citizens are expected to vote. (Voting is one way that people demonstrate that they are free to choose their leaders.)

Individual Behavior:
A person learns about the candidates, makes a choice, and votes.
Testing Your Cultural Assumptions

Purpose: To examine one’s own cultural assumptions and how they influence the interpretation of a different culture.

How much do we assume our own cultural values are universal and absolute, while those of others are fair game for study, criticism, condescension, and even contempt?

Activity: Read “Interpreting a Foreign Culture: The Nacirema” on the next page, and then try answering the following process questions. This can be done by yourself or with the newcomer group.

Process Questions:

• At what point did you become aware of what culture is being discussed?

• Can you describe your reactions when you realized it?

• What kind of value judgments does the “researcher” make? Can you list 3 or 4 of his/her cultural values?

• What kind of power relationship between the “researcher” and the Nacirema is implied by the tone?

• Now, take a few minutes to brainstorm ways of resisting ethnocentrism without losing your cultural identity.
Activities:
1. Teacher will read a story, for example, Aekyung’s Dream.

2. Students are introduced to different languages, customs, feelings, and physical traits through exercises in which they learn the value of differences and form an appreciation and knowledge of the communication system of other ethnic groups.

3. By using the book Aekyung’s Dream, such themes as stereotyping, differences, respect of others, language, culture, and the sense of “not belonging” will be explored. After reading the book, Aekyung’s Dream (preferably in parts with discussion after each reading), the following questions can be asked:

   * How do you think Aekyung felt?
   * Have you ever felt that way?
   * Do you know someone who has felt like Aekyung?
   * Have you ever been teased before?
   * What have you been teased about?
   * What is stereotyping?
   * Why is it ridiculous to be teased about how you look? (Bring out the fact that we do not have control over how we look. We can’t order ourselves.)
   * Do you know of another group of people who are teased because they look different like Aekyung?
   * List the negative differences that people tease about that many people face or have in common, such as: fat, skinny, short, tall, freckles, eyes, teeth, skin

Options:
Teach children to say hello in other languages after the introduction to hello in Korean:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Hello</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>On-yung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>Dzien Dobry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>Bon Jour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swahili</td>
<td>Jambo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Hola</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These words for hello can be introduced and used daily for one week (one at a time) until they are mastered. Others can be used if children are from other ethnic groups. This exercise can be used throughout the year for ethnic awareness and a sense of hello being used in the area of being alike.

   * After introducing the alphabet in Korean, compare it to the American alphabet and others.
   * Discuss the traditional homes in Korea (kiwi houses) and compare them to homes in our country.
Interpreting a Foreign Culture:

The Nacirema*

Nacirema culture is characterized by a highly developed market economy which has evolved in a rich natural habitat. While much of the people's time is devoted to economic pursuits, a large part of the fruits of these labors and considerable portion of the day are spent in ritual activity. The focus of this activity is the human body, the appearance and health of which loom as a dominant concern of the people. While such a concern is certainly not unusual, its ceremonial aspects and associated philosophy are unique.

The fundamental belief underlying the whole system appears to be that the human body is ugly and that its natural tendency is to debility and disease. Incarcerated in such a body, a man's only hope is to avert these characteristics through the use of powerful influences of ritual and ceremony. Every household has one or more shrines devoted to this purpose.

The focal point of the shrine is a box or chest which is built into the wall. In this chest are kept the many charms and magical potions without which no native believes he could live. These preparations are secured from a variety of specialized practitioners. The most powerful of these are the medicine men, whose assistance must be rewarded with substantial gifts. However, the medicine men do not provide the curative potions for their clients, but decide what the ingredients should be and then write them down in ancient and secret language. This writing is understood only by the medicine men and by the herbalist who, for another gift, provide the required charm.

The Nacirema culture has an important kind of practitioner, known as a "listener." This witch doctor has the power to exorcise the devils that lodge in the heads of people who have been bewitched. The Nacirema believe that parents bewitch their own children. Mothers are particularly suspected of putting a curse on children while teaching them the secret body ritual. The patient simply tells the listener all his troubles and fears, beginning with the earliest difficulties he can remember.

The ritual life of the Nacirema has certainly shown them to be a magic-ridden people. It is hard to understand how they have managed to exist so long under the burdens which they have imposed upon themselves.

Exploring Your Own World View

Purpose: To explore your own ways of looking at the world.

Activity: This activity can be done by yourself or with the newcomer group you are working with. It is a good lead-in to a discussion of culture and different world views.

Check whether you agree with the following statements or attitudes:

1. All people are born equal. Yes__ No__
2. I never trust strangers. That's just stupid. Yes__ No__
3. People deserve the benefit of the doubt. Yes__ No__
4. If I fail at something, I stop there. I wasn't meant to do it. Yes__ No__
5. If I fail the first time around, I try to learn from the experience for the next time. It is not that I don't have the potential. Yes__ No__
   It's just a question of practice.
6. It's not really important if I fail or succeed; what's important is that I understand myself. Yes__ No__
7. We depend on nature to live. If we upset the balance, who knows what will happen? Yes__ No__
8. Of course you need to be careful, but the earth is there, why not use it? Science and technology usually can fix any problem we may encounter. Yes__ No__
9. We are the stewards of the earth. We need to respect and protect nature. Yes__ No__
10. Older people are often out of touch with the world today. Yes__ No__
11. Change is normal and good. Yes__ No__
12. I expect to be pretty much like my parents, and expect my children will be pretty much like me. Yes__ No__
13. When I am doing something with a group, I don't like being singled out for praise. Yes__ No__
14. I am most comfortable in a group when it's clear who is in charge. Yes__ No__
15. In the end, nobody has the right to tell me what to do. Yes__ No__
Process Questions:

- Where would you put yourself in the world-view continuum (human nature, man-nature relationships, time, activity, social relations)?

- How many of your responses can you attribute to culture?

- How many do you think result more from your individual personality?

- If this was a group activity, how was your world-view different from the group's? How are people in the group different from each other? List the differences. List the similarities.

- What problems does the group see arising from the differences? From the similarities?

- What benefits does the group see in having these differences? In having the similarities?
Culture and Social Structure

Every society has persistent patterns of social relationships and interactions agreed on by most of its members. These organized patterns constitute what is called a social structure. The teacher-student relationship is one such pattern where cultural agreements about the way a teacher and student should interact are defined by society and not by the individuals in those roles. Social structure imposes cultural expectations on how people from different groups or in different roles should behave towards each other: parent and child, woman and man, employer and employee. It also may dictate how a Vietnamese, Russian or Haitian might behave with an American, or how a practitioner should behave when working with urban, rural, or newcomer communities.

As practitioners, we will need to define with the group how to relate to each other, as well as what kind of behaviors are expected. How long and difficult this process is will depend on how acculturated the group is and how skilled the practitioner is in “travelling” from her or his culture to that of the newcomers.

Social Status and Role

The social position that a person occupies in relation to other groups or individuals determines that person’s status in society. Every culture has unspoken agreements concerning which statuses are ascribed and which achieved. Ascribed status can be illustrated by people who receive status as a birthright, by virtue of who they are rather than what they do. The Queen of Thailand, a Native American, a white Anglo, or a woman could be examples. On the other hand, achieved status can be found in positions that people either earn or choose, as in people who become priests, teachers, doctors, Democrats, or parents. Many statuses have elements of both achievement and ascription. At any given time, a person may enjoy several kinds of status and construct his or her identity based on them.

Roles are a set of culturally agreed upon expectations about the behavior of people according to their position and status in society. For example, society to a certain extent dictates the roles that mothers and daughters assume towards each other, as well as the roles that women and men, youth and elders are expected to play in the public arena.
Changing Roles

As an elder, Agbeki was a leader of his community in west Africa. Now in the United States he finds that Americans fail to recognize his life knowledge and experience, and do not show him the respect to which he is accustomed. Even members of his own community are beginning to listen less to him and more to the youth who have been educated in the United States. Agbeki experiences alienation and a sense of uselessness, as well as fearing for the continuity of leadership in his community.

Kossi, who was a young child when he arrived in the United States, finished college and soon became director of the Community Board. Though he has the skills necessary for the position, Kossi is uneasy to be put in the spotlight, knowing that in traditional culture only people much older would hold his position. He sees that when he facilitates a meeting, he is not accepted as a leader by older members of the community. He recognizes that he is expected to defer to his elders within the traditional culture.

Aisha, the only woman on the board, finds her membership as something she would never be able to do in Africa. Being on the board makes her feel respected and important. She wants to set an example for other women in the community, and hopes to encourage others to join. Most of the younger board members welcome her and have asked the director to recruit other women for next year. Some older women, however, have begun to exclude her from traditional women's activities.
Roles

Purpose: To compare roles important to the group's indigenous and host cultures; to reflect on how these roles affect how the group works together.

Activity: Every group and community is composed of people in different roles. Roles important to one culture may be different from those of another. It's important for groups undergoing cultural transition to be aware of the different roles in their indigenous, host, and shifting cultures.

1. In the following activity, list some traditional roles that have special significance in the home culture of your group. Be sure to include those represented by individuals in the group.

Example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
<th>Relationships</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>elder</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mother</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>healer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>priest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Then describe what it means to be each one. What responsibilities, relationships, and status does each role carry?

3. Now go through the same process for group members' new roles in the United States.
Process Questions:

- Which roles are significant in both cultures? Which are not?

- How does each role differ from one culture to the other? (For example, the loss of status for the elder in the scenario described above.)

- What is the result of this change in roles in terms of a third, new culture?

- How does this affect the way in which the group works together? The way it interacts with mainstream culture?
Status and roles do not only describe who you are and what you do but they also help us to understand how social interactions are organized. For example, all societies have agreements about how a husband and wife should relate to one another. In some cultures, wives are extremely submissive to their husbands and extended family. In others, wives may dominate their husbands. Still other cultures may support a husband-wife relationship that is more egalitarian.

Some patterns of social interaction occur within social organizations such as families, churches and schools. When these groups are taken collectively, they become institutions; people refer to “the institution of marriage” or “the institution of the church.” These abstractions represent the ordering of all aspects of our social lives by education, religion, business, family, and government. For example, the institution of the family reflects broad agreements about what a family should be. In the United States, the nuclear family is assumed to be composed of a man, a woman, and children, where the adults provide for the children’s welfare. In other societies, the concept of family might be extended to include sisters, brothers, aunts, uncles, and grandparents; and the adults might be expected to provide for both young and old members. Despite these generalizations, we need to stress that individual families differ within this broad concept.
Culture and Social Organization

**Purpose:** To identify and map those organizations that are important for the newcomer community. To reflect on how the relationship between these organizations is influenced by the cultural context.

**Activity:**
1. Look at the following diagram and see how the importance and participation of certain institutions and organizations changes as the cultural context changes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newcomer community perspective in the USA</th>
<th>Newcomer Community perspective back home</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image_url" alt="Diagram" /></td>
<td><img src="image_url" alt="Diagram" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The diagram illustrates the changes in the importance of various institutions and organizations from the newcomer community perspective in the USA to the perspective back home, highlighting how cultural contexts influence these relationships.
2. Next, identify institutions and organizations that were relevant for the newcomer group back at home and institutions and organizations that are relevant for the group in their host community.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Important organizations today</th>
<th>Important organizations back home.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. __________________________</td>
<td>1. __________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. __________________________</td>
<td>2. __________________________</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. __________________________</td>
<td>3. __________________________</td>
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<td>4. __________________________</td>
<td>4. __________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. __________________________</td>
<td>5. __________________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How do they relate to one another?
Who are the members of each?
Which organizations have more power?
Which organizations are essential the group’s cultural identity?
Which are most important to take into account when working with this particular community?

Process Questions:

Once you have decided which organizations are important to take into account, try answering the following:

- What cultural function does this organization address?

- Who are its members?

- How are decisions made?

- What status does it enjoy within the newcomer group? Within the host culture?

- What cultural conflicts exist between the organization’s traditional role and the expectations of its role by the host culture?
Social Group Identity

Social groups share, to varying degrees, a common culture within a given country; they also, however, have some important cultural differences. In the United States, women have different ways of behaving and communicating than men; working class people have different values than middle and upper-class people; people from the mid-west have different cultures than people from the west coast. In other countries, higher caste groups have different social status and privilege than lower caste groups; western-liberal elites have different ideological values than indigenous grassroots people; rural women behave and think differently from urban women.

Most individuals at any given time identify with a number of different groups. A Muslim woman who is a physician will likely have three separate identities based on religion, gender, and education. National identity is formed when people internalize a country's culture and history. In a society where different ethnic groups co-exist, national identity is formed through the sharing of experiences and historical conditions, i.e., the same school systems, TV stations, government, jobs, etc. In this sense, the ethnic identity of a nation or group will always be heterogenous in some ways and homogenous in others.

In addition, within any nation you will find unique social groups that contribute to people's identity. For instance, racial and ethnic identity is formed and maintained through a shared sense of peoplehood based on language, religion, family, and tradition. In the United States, group identities are based on gender, sexual orientation, age, ability, socioeconomic class, as well as on race and ethnicity. In other cultures, you may see important identities with one's caste, kinship ties, religion, political ideology, language, education, region of origin, and degree of urbanization, in addition with race and ethnicity.

Diversity within Newcomer Groups

As a nation of immigrants, the United States is a multicultural society composed of ethnic groups with their own distinctive cultures. Like previous newcomers before them, current immigrants and refugees bring to the United States their traditional culture. However, during the process of adapting to their new environment, aspects of this culture transform into new forms and patterns (See Chapter 2: "Cross-Cultural Adaptation" for a full discussion). Consequently, the ethnic culture of newcomer groups in the United States, while resembling their traditional one, assumes new characteristics.

As we have said before, culturally-shared interpretations of the world give people a sense of belonging and identity. Yet, when the traditional culture is undergoing change, these interpretations also change, as do the roles people adopt as a result of them. This is important to consider when working with newcomer communities: at any point in time, the social identities of the group's various members may be redefined due to a shift in the statuses and roles.

The less familiar we are with a group's culture, the more difficulty we have in recognizing the social groups to which different members belong. Instead, we may focus on the group's common culture, those things that distinguish them from us. For newcomer groups, the differences they see
among themselves may not be according to the categories Westerners might expect. Therefore, by lumping everyone together, Westerners heighten stress among members whose individual identity is ignored. It's important, therefore, to look for and acknowledge these differences, to talk about them, and to underscore them as a source of strength for the group.

**EXERCISE**

**Diversity Assessment**

**Purpose:** To help assess one's knowledge of the group and its community as well as helping the newcomers assess their own differences.

**Activity:** Divide the group into subgroups of 3 to 4 persons. Have each group answer the questionnaire on the following page. They can mark more than one alternative per question. As they do this they should think of the following process questions:

- What similarities and differences do we have as a group?

- How are the similarities an advantage or disadvantage to us? (You may want to address the question by thinking about other issues you're working with like leadership, conflict resolution, etc.)

- How are the differences an advantage or disadvantage to us?

Afterwards, give each group paper and colored pencils and have them make a picture of what they've learned from the questionnaire: the differences and similarities that they've become aware of as a result of the exercise. Then have each group present and explain their drawings to the larger group.
**Questionnaire**

1. People in our community speak
   ___ the same native language or dialect
   ___ different native languages or dialects, but we have a common language
   ___ different native languages with no common language so that communicating is
difficult between ourselves.

2. Adults in our community have
   ___ no formal education
   ___ basic (elementary) education
   ___ high school education
   ___ technical school or university education

3. Adults in our community can
   ___ not read and/or write in our native language
   ___ read and write at a basic level in our native language
   ___ read and write fluently in our native language

4. People in our community have or have had
   ___ opposite political ideologies
   ___ different political ideologies
   ___ similar political ideologies
   ___ this question is not relevant to people in our community

5. People in our community practice and/or believe
   ___ different religions
   ___ similar religions
   ___ this question is not relevant to people in our community

6. Before coming to this country our community background was
   ___ rural
   ___ small villages or towns
   ___ urban

7. At the present, people in our community are mainly
   ___ the same age or generation
   ___ different ages and generations
Culture and Power

Culture also brings in an element of power relations. Cultural groups have social and political relationships of dominance and subordination, relationships that often result in the oppression and exploitation of the weaker group. The dominant group usually defines the mainstream culture while people belonging to subordinate groups develop their own subcultures and are often alienated or not accepted by the mainstream. While addressing the issue of power in an American context, we need to recognize that concepts of power, dominance, subordination, oppression, and exploitation may be defined differently by newcomer groups or not at all. Nevertheless, it is important to explore newcomer experiences in terms of intergroup and majority-minority relations, and how various ethnic groups are integrated in different ways into the social, political and economic hierarchies.

The plight of many racial and ethnic groups in this country is the result of structured inequality and racial oppression. Moreover, the lack of opportunity and structural constraints to self-determination causes some forms of cultural deprivation among ethnic groups. As practitioners it's vital we recognize these differences in social status and power between groups. Our own ethnicity, gender, class, and status have important consequences for our work with people of varying social groups. Issues of wealth, racism, exploitation, education, and cultural identity and preservation (to name a few) are sensitive and potentially explosive from the individual level through the societal level. These issues may well be a source of friction to the group you work with, defensiveness in yourself, or vice-versa. They are unlikely to be openly recognized or discussed without conflict or conscious effort in your part as a trained, non-judgmental facilitator. Particularly if you are a member of a dominant group, failure to anticipate and counteract the effects of your own cultural assumptions and biases will only reinforce a subordinate-culture group's experience of oppression and alienation.
The Power Circle

**Purpose:** To help practitioners identify how we are as individuals in relation to the power structure in our culture; to reflect how social power affects our work and relationship with newcomer communities.

**Activity:** Using the "Power Circle" on the following page, fill in the following information: In Circle One, identify your social identity according to the categories* listed (add other social or cultural categories if you wish). In Circle Two, write whether this social identity puts you in a dominant or subordinate group in the U.S. mainstream culture. In Circle Three, decide if this identity is dominant or subordinate relative to the culture of the newcomer group.

**Process Questions:**

When you are done, discuss your perceptions with friends or co-workers. How do their perceptions differ or agree with yours? Try doing the same with the group you are working with. Some of their responses might surprise you.

- How are people in your group similar to you? Different?
- On what do you base your perceptions?
- How do they (or how do you think they) perceive themselves?
- How do they (or how do you think they) perceive you?

**NOTE:** We all tend to categorize people according to the groups presented in this Power Circle. Such generalizations are useful in helping us to predict, make sense of, and respond to different kinds of behavior. Remember, however, that they also mask the wide variations among individuals of any particular ethnic group and, applied indiscriminately, can be the basis for prejudice. We like to think of them as handy tools that may or may not fit the task, rather than as inflexible categories.
Circle One, identify your social identity according to the categories* listed (add other social or cultural categories if you wish). In Circle Two, write whether this social identity puts you in a dominant or subordinate group in the U.S. mainstream culture. In Circle Three, decide if this identity is dominant or subordinate relative to the culture of the newcomer group.

* adopted from R. Arnold et. al., *Educating for a Change*, Toronto, ON: Between the Lines, 1991
The migration of people moving from one country to another has occurred throughout human history and has played an important part in the existence of racial and ethnic groups in all the areas of the world. In modern times, the geographic movement of immigrants and refugees has dramatically changed the demographic profile of many nations, including the United States.

Newcomers: Immigrants and Refugees

American history reflects successive waves of newcomers, from the first settlers to the recent wave of Cambodians, Laotians, Haitians, Guatemalans, Russians, and others. It is these people for whom the series is intended. Each newcomer group has faced and conquered countless problems in a new and strange cultural environment. Each group has brought its own culture to contribute to the multicultural landscape of American society.

Recent refugees and immigrants are newcomers to the cultural, social, economic, and political fabric of American society. Newcomer groups whose experience has been traumatic, or whose cultures of origin are vastly different from American culture, often experience difficulty adjusting to life in the United States. For example, Southeast Asians, fleeing years of war to live in an urbanized, technological society, have had one of the most discordant experiences of any groups coming into this country.

Immigrants

Immigrants voluntarily migrate from their country of birth to another country in search of better social and economic conditions. Immigration is considered a permanent move. The majority of people making up America are the result of three waves of immigration.

Refugees

Refugees, on the other hand, migrate involuntarily to another country, seeking asylum from war or political persecution. This definition would include Cubans fleeing Castro and Cambodians fleeing the Khmer Rouge. Unlike immigrants, many refugees hope eventually to return to their homeland. Nonetheless, many decide to settle in their new country.

Based on your own situation, either as a newcomer or a descendant of newcomers, try thinking how you or your family fit into the above categories:

- When did I/my ancestors come to this country?
- Did we come alone, or with others of the same nationality?
- What were the circumstances that caused me/them to come?
- What was my family's/ancestor's experience on first entering the U.S.?
- Did I/they come of my/their own will, or were we compelled to come?
The Experience of Newcomers

It's hard for anyone who has never been in the position of losing family, friends, community, possessions, job—all that make us who we are—to imagine what newcomers undergo upon entering the United States. Certainly this was the experience of the African slaves. The closest contemporary American experience might be that of people who have lost their jobs or their homes, or both; but this doesn't really compare with also losing familiarity with the physical landscape, language, and basic aspects of culture.

The experience of refugees is far more severe than that of immigrants. Yet immigrants, though they come willingly and have not suffered the trauma of losing family and community to violence, still undergo the dissonance of losing their culture. On top of that, they must face disillusionment when realities of life in the United States collide with their initial hopes and expectations. Their adjustment most likely means facing poverty, isolation, and racial, ethnic, or language discrimination.

Scenario

Fleeing his war-torn country, Sreng eventually ends up in the United States. It isn't simply a question of moving from one country to another, but of a long exodus. When the enemy burns his home and takes his father prisoner, he and his family leave the village where he has spent all his life. After that, he, with thousands of other people, go to a refugee camp in a neighboring—though still foreign—country. There he watches his mother sicken and his two sisters get weak from starvation.

At twelve, he is suddenly in charge of the family. When later they all have died, Sreng is "adopted" by a Christian church group. He does not know what this "Christian" means. They move him thousands of miles to a freezing small New England mill-town, a metropolis compared to the village he grew up in.

Here he is to stay. At this point, what has happened to his heritage, his cultural roots?
Guided Imagery

**Purpose:** To help practitioners experience the effects of loss and change.

**Activity:** This exercise can be done with a group. At a minimum you need two people: one person to read, and one person to listen. Close your eyes. Think about who you are. Then have the other person read the following images, slowly and quietly, leaving a pause in between. Do your best to really feel the scene as if it were happening.

Imagine being somewhere where no one looks like you, and no one understands your history, traditions, or religion, or your ideas about family, community, and ethics. Imagine further that there’s no going back to the life you once knew.

**Supposing...**
one day you go to work and discover you’ve been laid off...

**Supposing...**
you go home and your house has burned. Nobody seems to know anything about your family... you spend the night in the street...

**Supposing...**
you go to your friend’s house and someone new is living there...

**Supposing...**
your wallet isn’t in your pocket anymore... you go to the police station and no one seems to understand anything you say... you can’t understand them, either...everyone stares at you....

**Supposing...**
everyone is wearing outlandish costumes, in fact, everyone’s skin is a different color than yours...you go outside and don’t recognize where you are....

After going through these images, think about your feelings. If several people are in the “listening” role, talk about each other’s reactions. If just two of you are doing the exercise, you might want to switch between the roles of “reader” and “listener” and then compare reactions.

- What thoughts and feelings emerged from these images?
- Was there any point where you started feeling confused, anxious?
- What particular scenes threatened your sense of identity, of who you are?
**The Adaptation Process**

Acculturation can be defined as the process of adjustment and adaptation to cultural norms, values, and institutions. As refugees and immigrants become exposed to this system, increasing acculturation occurs.

Traumatic as the experience of newcomers is, most people do adjust. At the group level, "cross-cultural adaptation" is the name given to adjusting to a new culture which results in changes to the traditional one. Like previous newcomers before them, current newcomers bring their traditional heritage to their adopted home land which then undergoes change during cross-cultural adaptation. This process, which has occurred throughout history, results in a new way of operating that fuses elements of traditional and American cultures.

From the standpoint of the host country, we might call this new culture "ethnic". In this way cross-cultural adaptation also results in marginalization of newcomer groups. When an ethnic group such as the Haitians enters the United States, overnight thy go from identifying themselves as “the people,” the norm of society, to seeing themselves as an ethnic minority, and a small minority in a large country at that. The political and psychological implications of this change in perception are dramatic. What must be the group’s sense of empowerment after undergoing such changes? What about their sense of identity? Of power?

**Forms of Cross-Cultural Adaptation**

History reveals that different newcomer groups follow different patterns of adaptation in becoming part of America’s cultural landscape. These patterns relate to how they interact with other groups; how they vie for resources; how they maintain or abandon ethnic traditions and where they fit in our pluralistic society. For example, some become integrated into the mainstream, some form ethnic enclaves, while others become marginalized.
Cross-cultural adaptation can be broken down according to the degree to which each group changes or preserves its traditional culture:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assimilation</th>
<th>Amalgamation</th>
<th>Cultural Pluralism</th>
<th>Isolation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assimilation</strong> is one end of the spectrum where all traces of the original culture vanish under the pressure to conform to the new one. The newcomers are deprived of their own cultural identity and absorbed by the established mainstream culture. Unity and conformity are valued, and difference is feared.</td>
<td><strong>Amalgamation</strong> refers to the blending of the best attributes and traditions of different cultures to form a new distinct culture. <strong>Melting Pot</strong> is a related concept, only here, no attributes and traditions of the original cultures survive.</td>
<td><strong>Cultural Pluralism</strong> is a compromise between preserving the newcomer’s traditional culture and adapting to the new one. People adjust their cultures only enough to communicate and cooperate with the rest of society. Like the melting pot, no one culture dominates. Unlike it, in cultural pluralism, difference and diversity are vital traits to be celebrated rather than feared.</td>
<td><strong>Isolation</strong> and segregation represent the other extreme from assimilation. Here, cultures exist separately, for the most part independent of each other. <strong>Isolation</strong> is a group-imposed withdrawal from the larger society, for example, the Amish and the Shakers who lead an independent existence and maintain traditional ways. <strong>Segregation</strong> is imposed by the larger society to keep people in “their place,” in the way that Native Americans were treated during colonial times and African Americans before desegregation. Slavery and apartheid are extreme forms of segregation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Marginalization

Marginalization occurs when newcomer groups do not feel in touch with either traditional or dominant cultures. A feeling of confusion and distress accompanies both alienation and loss of identity. Ethnic enclaves in urban communities, where newcomers live in isolation, often result from this marginalization. However, such enclaves also serve as protective havens where newcomers seek refuge from a hostile and unfamiliar environment.

Power Issues

Different power issues emerge from these various forms of cross-cultural adaptation. Both amalgamation and cultural pluralism imply equality of all cultures, though in amalgamation all merge into one. But in assimilation, one culture is dominated by the other, giving up its identity to be subsumed into the other. Isolation implies that the culture willingly withdraws from contact with others, whereas segregation implies that one culture imposes the separation to keep the other in a dependent, subjugated position. The history of race relations in South Africa or in the U.S. history are examples. It boils down to a question of degree: too much assimilation results in loss of culture and identity, too little results in isolation from mainstream society and in the development of a second-class citizenry.
The Continuum of Cross-Cultural Adaptation:
Finding yourself and your family

**Purpose:** To help practitioners explore cross-cultural adaptation as something relevant to their own ethnic background, rather than only to newcomer groups.

**Activity:** Think about your own ethnic group or your family’s ethnic roots and how this differs from the American mainstream. Try making a list to compare these two groups. Starting with tangible things may help you see legacies from your family’s country of origin.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Roots</th>
<th>Mainstream Culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holidays</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music and dancing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proper mode of dress</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family relations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• formal or informal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• well structured</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior toward strangers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• what’s considered polite, rude</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• showing emotion in public</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes toward private property</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• share with others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• individualistic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ways of resolving conflicts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• silence or withdrawal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• negotiation</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Even if you are 100% Anglo-Saxon and your ancestors came over on the Mayflower, still try to trace back what traditions and ways of behaving could be identified as “English” as opposed to “American.” Or try seeing what you could attribute to regional culture as opposed to broad popular culture: southern vs. mid-western, New Yorkers vs. New Englanders.

- How acculturated to American norms do you see yourself?
- Does your family still maintain distinct ethnic traditions?
- Or does your ethnic heritage only exist in vestiges of culture: certain foods, certain songs?
Cross-Cultural Adaptation in Groups and Individuals

Anytime a group comes in contact with a culture totally different from their own, they are bound to experience conflict. The more different the cultures in contact, the more extreme the conflict. The response of newcomers to this conflict is influenced by their extent of cross-cultural adaptation; i.e., the degree to which they retain the ethnic culture vs. the degree to which they are exposed to mainstream culture.

Usually everyone in any given newcomer group will have had some contact with mainstream American culture, such as buying items at a store, speaking English, working, going to school, or renting an apartment or house. Some may have been exposed to American culture even before they arrived, either in refugee camps or in their homeland. These experiences increase a newcomer's knowledge about the new culture, and affect the ease or difficulty of his or her cross-cultural adaptation.

Transitional Phase

To a certain degree, newcomers have some control over what form their adjustment to the new culture takes, particularly if they are aware of and understand the adaptation process and what options they have. Nonetheless, they usually go through a transitional stage of “deculturation.” During this stage, the group has no stable culture, but fragments of many cultures which have not yet been integrated. This transitional culture continually shifts and changes. Of course no culture is static, but in newcomer groups, the culture undergoes rapid change. The result is both a frightening loss of security and an opportunity for creative growth.

Deculturation’s positive aspects, however, are easier to see in retrospect. As it is occurring, the group will likely feel confused and anxious. They may reject mainstream solutions to problems, but have trouble identifying traditional solutions or creating new ones.

The Chinese symbol for “crisis” involves two characters fused together: one meaning “danger,” the other meaning “hidden opportunity.”
**Individual Adjustment**

On the individual level, the confusion and anxiety of deculturation is manifested in culture shock, self doubt, helplessness, and inaction. The term “culture shock” describes the anxiety and stress resulting from being in a different culture. Some manifestations of culture shock include grief, confusion about values, and fragmented social support. But gradually, each person in the group will work out individual solutions to how much or little to adopt the new culture. Thus, each of them will be in a slightly different position on the acculturation continuum.

Older, rural, or less educated members of the group are likely to adapt to the new culture the least. Relative to their whole life span, older members have been in the United States for the shortest time period; rural and less educated members often have had little exposure to other cultures while in their homeland. Hence, these people tend to be monocultural, rooted in traditional culture and holding on to familiar ways more strongly than others. Consequently, though they may have the strongest idea of how things ought to be done, they also may be the most traumatized by the changes, since what they see as the world order is no longer in effect. If their traditional culture is one where resignation is an appropriate response to fate, depression may well result.

On the other hand, younger, educated, or more urban members may feel more confused, but less helpless in reaction to culture shock. These members are often genuinely bicultural, particularly if they were born in this country. If that is the case, their feelings of cultural dissonance may be extreme as they alternate between American values during the day and traditional ones when they are back at home with parents. Bicultural members may exhibit several, and hence, confusing styles of behavior drawn from both cultures. At the same time, since they are familiar with both cultures, they are in an ideal position to mediate between the mainstream society and the newcomer community. If they are young, their age also works in favor of flexibility and adaptation.
On the group level, deculturation manifests itself as fragmentation and the shutdown of effective operation of the organization or community. When each group member has slightly different values, priorities, and goals, confusion is an inevitable result. If the group’s original culture values cooperation and interdependence, what happens when several members shift their priorities toward individual achievement and satisfaction? It’s hard enough for individuals to adapt, but even harder for a community or group to agree on new ways.

Consider the following dilemmas:

- Once traditional values are questioned, how will the group decide what new ways to adopt?
- If elders are no longer seen as authorities, who will take over?
- Who will decide whether it is better to plan out a future for the group, or let fate run its course?
- Why is one way of being better than another?

Another factor that influences group adaptation is the change in social structure that often occurs in newcomer groups. If the group’s original structure is different from American structure, members who are more acculturated will tend to reject the traditional one. For example, the social relationships between people and generations are often restructured, because the traditional social structure is no longer viable in the new culture. In addition, the group’s ethnic identity itself is often reshaped as a result of labeling by the dominant culture as “minority.”

- In cultures where elders are revered and powerful, what happens when the younger educated members are the only ones in a position to help the community?
- If the role of women is traditionally in the domestic arena, what is the result of contact with more liberal views? What happens if the culture is a cooperative one that depends on rigidly defined roles between men and women?
Cultural Boundaries: Assessing the degree of cross-cultural adaptation

Purpose: To capture the newcomer group’s perception of where it stands with respect to mainstream culture and help visualize future options.

Activity: Put everyone in groups of three to five people. Give each group a sheet of newsprint and colored markers or pencils. Have them imagine their culture and the mainstream culture as circles (or any other shape or metaphor they like), and draw them in relation to each other:

a large green (blue, white...whatever) circle for the mainstream community;

a small red (yellow, pink....) one for the newcomer community.

After enough time, about 30 minutes, ask the groups to put the drawings up on the wall and have each group interpret their drawing to the larger group. Ask them to reflect on these questions:

• What implications can you find in the drawings?

• Where is the ethnic community’s circle? Outside or inside the mainstream one? Being absorbed?

• What are its boundaries like? Porous? Dissolving? So thick and black no one from the mainstream circle can enter in, and no one from the ethnic circle can leave? Armored with spines? With plenty of openings or doors?

• What are the boundaries of the mainstream community like?

• Which circle is growing? Which is shrinking? Or are they staying the same with respect to each other?

• Can you imagine different futures for these circles? Merged into one color? A checkerboard? Two equal intersecting circles? Two circles with a carefully maintained “path” between them?
As newcomers encounter mainstream culture, the contrast in world view, social relations, and self-perception creates cultural disruption and disharmony. They cope with this situation by continuously rejecting and modifying old traditions, while simultaneously accepting and blending elements of the new culture.

The more the newcomer group understands the relationship of their experience in this new country to the process of cross-cultural adaptation, the more they will come to understand and accept why they feel the way they do, why certain conflicts—like those between generations or sexes—are occurring. This understanding can then be used by us, as practitioners, and by the group as a tool to help decrease the group's sense of helplessness.

As practitioners, we usually embrace the notion of cultural pluralism, assisting each newcomer group in choosing what aspects of their culture to retain and what to change. Each group's unique background, experience, and personality influence this transition, as well as each individual's way of adapting. Taken all together, these differing forms and degrees of cross-cultural adaptation all influence how the group will respond in any given situation.
We must be clear at the outset that community development in newcomer communities implies cultural and social change. It involves major changes in their social structures, traditions, values and attitudes, and institutions. This change is inevitable since newcomers are forced to cope and adapt to new realities of their sociocultural environment. The new reality, however, provides an opportunity, empowering individuals and strengthening cultural identity and determination.

Empowering Newcomers to Develop Their Community

In its broadest meaning, development is the liberation of human potential: to have basic needs met, to explore one's identity, and to be able to choose. Community development efforts that seek to fulfill these human needs among newcomers will have to address the issue of empowerment. We, as practitioners, must reduce the power imbalance that exists between us and the community. We must create processes that reduce power over others while enhancing power over the self. We must also see empowerment both as a goal and a process for community development.

Empowering newcomers to develop their community is achieved through educational processes which employ participatory approaches. It is people's "learning by doing" that is key to achieving community development goals, since participation requires the group to become actors, not passive recipients. A participatory process also promotes inclusion, not exclusion, of all social groups, be it of age, gender, race, or creed.

Such a process enhances the groups' self-reliance. They learn to define the issue, find the solutions, control the resources, and direct the processes affecting their lives. Only by making conscious value choices and creating their own processes can the newcomer group or community deepen their awareness of and transform the social reality which shapes their lives.
The Practitioner's Role

Unfortunately, the groups with the most need for self-determination are often the same ones looking for outside "authorities" to give them answers. Newcomer groups frequently fall into this category. Their way of solving problems may no longer be viable in the new country, and their sense of disempowerment and loss may put them in a stance of helplessness until they learn different ways of operating. People's awareness of the need for change and self-determination implies a certain level of consciousness unlikely to be present in newcomer groups. The practitioner's role in these cases needs to be a careful balance between providing enough direction to meet group expectations and encouraging their increased involvement in determining their future.

Important from our standpoint is the need to give the decision-making process over to the group as much as it will accept it. The relationship between the practitioner and group should be participatory and democratic, even if the culture of the group is not. They know best their own situation, and in the end, we stand to learn and change as much from the group as they from us.

Outsider/Insider

The relationship between you as practitioner and the group will be affected by how the contact was initiated. This sets the tone for how you and the group will interact. Were you called in as a technical advisor or as an outside facilitator? Or did you see a "need" for intervention and approach the group yourself?

Either approach is legitimate, though the first situation is certainly more desirable. People are more likely to invest themselves in change if they perceive it as coming from themselves rather than imposed on them from the outside, particularly if you—the outsider—represent the dominant culture.

Think about how much of an outsider you are with respect to the group. If your culture is close to that of the group's, you have several advantages over someone whose culture is not. Your knowledge of the community, its people, language, and ways of operating will be greater, and your understanding of its issues will be more deeply felt. Trust-building under these circumstances is easier.

On the other hand, you may not have the objectivity, the fresh perspective on the problems of the group, that someone from outside the culture might bring. Outsiders also have the advantage of being removed from whatever internal power struggles are present in the group. As a result, you are in the position of facilitating changes that the group structure would resist on its own. Of course, you will introduce a new power component into the group dynamics, one that can work to the group's advantage if you are aware of it, and that can derail progress if you are not.
Establishing a Working Relationship

As practitioners, the first thing we need to do is to get to know the group with whom we work testing our knowledge by gathering information and learning from them. Getting to know people is not merely an ice breaker, to put them at their ease. Rather it is laying essential groundwork for establishing a working relationship by developing mutual trust and cultural sensitivity.

Trust-Building

Cultural awareness, trust, and understanding are all connected; without one, you are not likely to see the others. In mainstream American culture, trust in a work relationship is commonly established through contracts, formal agreements, and by an unspoken code of professional behavior. But in other relationships it may occur through perception of common interests, social group, etc. In an assessment of the local Cambodian community, Cambodian interviewers stressed humility and listening to elicit trust. One of our writers, a Chilean, tells how in her country trust may be established through revealing social class and political ideology.

Trust-building is an ongoing process that will be tentative at first. In any case, regardless of culture, assumptions need to be clarified, roles and guidelines defined, and agendas set for the participants to develop trust in each other and in the group process.

Think about the following:

- How is trust established in my culture? In the group’s culture?
- What kinds of behavior interfere with trust? In my culture? In the group’s culture?
- What do I need to know about someone in order to trust him or her?
- How can I find this out? Through direct questions? Through observation? Through regular contact? Through other people?
- What do they need to know about me as a person in order to trust me?
- What am I doing to build or sabotage a trusting relationship with the group? Keeping confidences? Acting loyally? Speaking politely? Conforming to culturally appropriate dress & behavior? Expressing respect? Keeping commitments?
**Cultural (Mediator Teams)**

One way to encourage a participatory environment is to establish "cultural (mediator team)," small groups whose members are representative of the diversity and priorities present in the larger community. Such teams not only promote self-determination, but validate cultural differences.

The functions of cultural (mediator team) are:

- to mediate between the practitioner and the larger community;
- to serve as a cross-section of the community, large enough to be representative, but small enough to be accessible and manageable;
- to educate the larger community about the goals of the group;
- to educate the practitioners about the community and its culture;
- and to serve as a filter for evaluating possible projects.

In establishing a Cultural (mediator team), let the group control the membership; let them decide the criteria and procedure for selection. We simply recommend to them that the people they choose be representative and committed—or at least receptive—to the process of cultural change.
Cultural Sensitivity

We believe that an empowering process is not created through technique. The quality of the relationship—building trust and showing commitment—is what makes newcomer groups feel empowered. This relationship is founded, in part, by showing genuine respect for a group’s culture and by accepting their world views. We need to recognize how cultural identity shapes our world views, makes our sense of reality, and conditions our behavior with others.

There are several attitudes or roles that we as practitioners might have when working with culturally different groups and that affects the quality of the relationship that we develop.

“*We are so similar.*”

The practitioner assumes that she or he (especially cultural outsiders) and the newcomer group are culturally identical, tending to ignore or deny the significant differences in culture. This type of attitude leads us, consciously or unconsciously, to judge the newcomer group according to our own cultural values.

“They are so different.”

The practitioner has little incentive to understand the viewpoint of the group and tends to turn to the security of his or her own cultural perspective to value and judge the newcomer group. The practitioner may stereotype group members, not recognizing them as individuals. They are perceived in generic terms where one person is just like another person (“they look and act alike”).

These attitudes can perpetuate ethnocentrism where the practitioner's culture is perceived as superior to the newcomer's ethnic culture. The newcomers’ culture is not validated and their cultural identity is ignored. These ethnocentric attitudes disempower newcomers, by not giving them opportunities to explore and make connections with the host culture. More helpful to the empowering process is the following attitude:

“We accept and respect our differences and similarities.”

The practitioner acknowledges a genuine apprehension or ignorance of the newcomer’s culture. We have to accept the existence of our own values, assumptions, and ideologies, not deny or pretend that they do not exist. In doing so, we also need to reflect on how our own cultural bias and attitudes shape our relationship with the group with whom we work. The most important thing is to engage in a process of “discovery”, learning from and with the newcomer group, about how to build cultural bridges where both sides can travel between cultures.
Addressing the Issue

As community development catalysts, we must address issues within the newcomer’s sociocultural context. We must learn and understand from them what the issues are and how they define them. Then, and only then, can we help newcomers articulate and resolve these issues, since it is through their own knowledge, understanding, and experience that newcomers will make informed decisions.

There is no such thing as a blueprint for doing community development work in newcomer communities. However, here is a learning process that might be helpful in guiding them to work with their issues: putting the issue(s) being addressed in a larger context; presenting options in addressing or resolving the issue; developing criteria for making a choice; and choosing to change or not to change. In going through this learning process with newcomers, we must remember to be flexible, incorporate unknown elements, and embrace the continual exchange of action and reflection.

The Issue in Larger Context

In writing this series, we made certain assumptions about the relationship between the overt problems bringing a practitioner into a community and underlying causes. Most significantly, we assumed no problem or issue facing these newcomers could be separated from the larger community development processes and issues of cultural conflict and cross-cultural adaptation. We, therefore, believe any solution to these problems involves the issues presented in the rest of the manual—leadership, decision-making, communication, and conflict-resolution—seen through the lens of culture. We also believe that long-term, process-oriented solutions are worth the investment—indeed, are the only solutions empowering a group to develop their community.

Two perspectives can assist a group in understanding what the issues are and then help them articulate them better. One perspective is to understand the issue in cross-cultural context and the other is to put it in the larger context of community development process.

Cross-Cultural Context

• How is the issue defined and understood in the ethnic culture?
• What cross-cultural factors (e.g., intergenerational conflict) are contributing to the issue or problem?
• How is the issue influenced by the cross-cultural adaptation process?

Community Development Context

• What community structures, processes or methods of operating are contributing to the issue or problem?
• Which of these processes (e.g. communication, leadership, conflict resolution, etc.) are seen as the root or underlying cause of the issue or problem?
• Who are the stakeholders, who stands to gain or lose by addressing the issue?
• What aspect of the community development process does the group wish to address?
• How broad an issue do they wish to address? Do they want to address underlying problems?
• How narrow? Do they want to address manifested problems only?
Options to Address or Resolve an Issue

When a group comes in with the desire to address a specific issue, the solution usually involves a decision to retain, change, or modify some aspect of their culture, social structure, way of communicating or governing themselves, etc. Any issue can be seen as related both to a group’s control over its cross-cultural adaptation as well as over its own processes and structure. As practitioners, then, we should:

- Present options for addressing or resolving the topic that range between retaining traditional ways, accepting mainstream ways or some combination of the original and new.

- Assess how the orientation/cross-cultural adaptation of individual members affect the choice of options:
  - What are individual members’ viewpoints on the topic?
  - To what extent have individuals shifted from traditional views to more mainstream ones?

- Assess the orientation of the group as a whole:
  - What is the majority viewpoint?
  - Who holds it?
  - What is the minority viewpoint?
  - Who holds it?

Criteria for Making a Choice

Once the group becomes aware of the effects of using certain traditional methods (say, of making decisions) in the new country, it is entirely up to the members if they want to try and alter it. Group members may see change in this area as too drastic or disempowering, particularly if the suggestion for change has come from an outsider. Change always involves risk, no matter what culture or people. If members do decide to change, the possibility exists that it may not solve the problems they thought it would. They may still experience conflict, apathy, sadness, and feelings of disempowerment, and the group may still not achieve its desired goals.

But the group may also welcome a new perspective on the difficulties it experiences in a new culture or within the dominant community. With the help of a skillful facilitator, a different method of selecting leaders, for example, may give members hope that:

- conflict in the group, organization, or community will diminish;
- more members will be heard;
- the group’s operation will be more effective, allowing it to achieve goals;
- aspects of original methods may be incorporated, allowing cultural identity to be maintained;
- mainstream organizations will be more willing to listen and to fund them.
A Choice to Change or Not to Change

If the group does decide to work on changing a specific aspect of their culture, ask each person to think what he or she wants to get out of the experience to feel something positive has happened. Then, help them decide who will make the decision. Does everyone get equal voice? Or do cultural considerations dictate certain lines of authority? Make sure it’s not you, the practitioner, who decides!

The group has to define the rate and extent of change. They need to recognize some limitations (as well as people’s expectations) to the change desired. Are these realistic?

A contract can be developed to reflect these expectations and limitations. Suggest drawing up a “contract” in which everyone agrees who, when, where, and for how long they will work on an issue. A discussion around these issues can define the extent and nature of the group’s expectations, and help avoid disappointment later on.

Finally, respect a group’s decision not to change if that is what they so desire.

EXERCISE

Choosing The Original, The New or Both

Purpose: To provide options for addressing or resolving an issue.

Activity: Ask the group how the issue is usually addressed or resolved in their own culture and in the new culture; then discuss with them the possibility of combining features of the original and new cultures. Then, have individuals share where they would place their choice in the range presented on the following page. By gathering and summarizing the individual choices, have the group come up with a collective decision.
The River of Cultural Change

Mainstream (New Culture)

Traditional Stream (Original Culture)

Cross-Stream (Original & New)
Describe the specifics related to the issue:

<table>
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<th>Range between</th>
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<td>ACCEPTING MAINSTREAM WAYS</td>
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Individual Names:

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<th>1.</th>
<th>ACCEPTING MAINSTREAM WAYS</th>
<th>RETAINING TRADITIONAL</th>
<th>COMBINING THE ORIGINAL AND NEW</th>
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<td>6.</td>
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Discuss the results and synthesize what the group wants to do to address or resolve the issue. Write a summary of the decision:
Deciding to Change or Not to Change

**Purpose:** To develop criteria for making an informed choice to change or not to change.

**Activity:** Discuss with the group the effects of different options in addressing or resolving the issue. Go through the guiding questions below, presenting them in context relevant to the group. Use the steps as a process for a collective decision. This can be done with the whole group or discussed in pairs, triads, or small groups.

Use the following as steps to develop criteria for making a choice either to change or not to change:

1. Discuss possible consequences of change.

2. Assess the needs and expectations of the group/community.
   - How much does the community want to interact with other cultural groups?
   - How much does it want to interact with mainstream organizations or groups?
   - How important is it to retain traditional values and cultural characteristics?
   - Which of these are most important?
   - Which values or characteristics is the group willing to give up in order to interact more easily with other groups (e.g., language, way of making decisions, etc.)?

3. Assess the expectations of the mainstream culture.
   - Who is the mainstream community? What organizations make it up (e.g., church, schools, government)?
   - What does the mainstream community know about the newcomer culture?
   - Is the newcomer community the only different group living within it? How have other ethnic communities been received by them?
   - What are the mainstream community’s expectations? Does it expect newcomers to conform to its norms? Or does it accept and/or value cultural diversity?

4. Decide on priorities by choosing the 3 most critical issues.

   --- Maintaining ethnic identity
   --- Preserving traditional values and customs
   --- Preserving the traditional language
   --- Preserving group cohesiveness
   --- Getting community needs addressed
   --- Receiving support from the ethnic community
   --- Receiving support from the mainstream community
   --- Insuring future viability of the group’s resources and finances
   --- Short-term “fix” vs long-term solutions
   --- Others: ____________________________
A Contractual Agreement

**Purpose:** To develop a contractual agreement reflecting a realistic expectation of the group's desire to accomplish a desired goal.

**Activity:** Have the group work on the following contract based on a collective agreement about the issue, the needs, and the group's commitment.

### A Contractual Agreement

1. We as a group agree to work on the following issue or problem:

    
    
    

2. We agree on the following needs to come out of this process so that each one of us feels we have accomplished something positive for our organization/community:

    
    
    

    People Involved: ______________________________

    
    
    

3. We agree that the group will spend the following amount of time to work on this process:

    Date: From ________ to ________

    Time: Hours per session: ________

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Although the manual targets newcomer groups, the theories and interventions offered are applicable to people in all kinds of circumstances. Wherever people of different cultures, social classes, races and religions interact, the need for working out understandings based on diverse values and expectations exists.

**African and Native Americans**

Two groups bear special consideration for practitioners working in the United States: African Americans, whose ancestors came involuntarily to the Americas, and Native Americans, who were already here. Neither refugees nor immigrants, these peoples have long histories of oppression and discrimination in the United States. Both were kept separate from European Americans and denied the rights held inalienable by whites, and to this day, the values and traditions of both are under-represented in American culture.

Though practitioners working with these groups may not see issues of cultural shock and adaptation associated with refugees and immigrants, they will most certainly face issues of cultural difference and oppression. In doing so, practitioners will need to pay careful attention to how their own ethnic background influences the group process.

**International Setting**

The dynamics of working with Native and African Americans could be applied to other groups around the world who are faced with a major power imbalance with a dominant majority. Indigenous groups like the Australian Aborigines undoubtedly share many issues with American aboriginal peoples, and many issues faced by refugees and immigrants to the United States are also relevant to displaced peoples all over.

Ethnic conflict such as that occurring in Rwanda and Bosnia-Herzegovina highlight the critical need for increased cultural pluralism and tolerance, something that usually requires training of the kind presented in this series. If the recent history of the globe is any indication, ethnic hatred and intolerance are on the rise. The time is ripe for conscious intervention by people who have learned how to cut through the confusions resulting when two or more cultures collide.

Even in peaceful regions, the ability to take differences and turn them into assets is valuable to anyone working in foreign countries or with people from foreign cultures. This is as true of indigenous peoples working with Americans or other foreigners in their country, as it is of Americans working abroad.

The need for cultural adaptation becomes much more obvious to the practitioner when he or she is the foreigner rather than on home turf. In fact, issues of culture shock may be more relevant to the
practitioner under these circumstances than to the group that he or she intends to work with. Americans consulting abroad may experience particular problems stemming from the position of the United States in the world and from being outsiders in a Third World country. Even when the group is no longer under the direct influence of western nations—such as many peoples in Africa, Asia, and Latin America—western practitioners may have difficulties arising from neocolonialist attitudes that place whites and western ideas on a pedestal. In this last situation, it is especially critical (and difficult) to elicit local knowledge and cultural tools without imposing one’s own.

Parting Words

In producing this _manual_, we as writers and researchers underwent a process similar to what we hope practitioners will go through when working with different cultural groups. For those of us raised in the United States, the series became a vessel by which to question lifelong assumptions about American culture, and a way to experience altering the basic tenets that govern how we live.

For newcomers, of course, such questioning is forced upon them in the form of daily confrontations with unfamiliar sights, values, actions, and ways of communicating. Hence for those of us who came from other cultures, the series became a way of thinking through our relationship with American culture and our place as newcomers in it.

How useful this _manual_ is to people in the field will largely hinge on how well it presents the differences between cultures while fully acknowledging the wide variations occurring within them: within minority cultures, social groups, and individuals. In theory, it seems easy to define differences between peoples, but our day-to-day experience of culture reveals it to be elusive and changeable. Differences do exist, but often they can only be seen as part of a continuum. The precise point at which, say, the culture of the American Midwest becomes east coast, cannot be defined.

Not only do countries and regions vary according to culture, but on a micro scale, groups and individuals vary according to their socialization and personality. Thus, Cambodian youth might have more flexibility in adapting to unfamiliar circumstances than their elders. Everyone has a cultural background, but not everyone follows its conventions all the time. People choose how to act, what conventions to follow, and what to modify. In fact, the ability to alter one’s behavior from convention becomes the basis for all creative change, whether it be social, political, or artistic.

The _manual_ is based on the contention that people can learn to shape and control their lives in the face of these changes. This contention is fully developed in Part II of the _manual_, where practical interventions are described in such areas as leadership, conflict-resolution, communication, and decision-making.
If nothing else, we hope that readers take away with them the realization that it's not business as usual when working with groups of different ethnicities. You can't assume your approach is the only way, or that people will come around to your approach. Although you don't have to adopt the beliefs of the culture with which you work, you do have to put yourself in a posture of acceptance and belief. Your own cultural beliefs become a point of departure: you start from what you know and then move out into less familiar territory.

Practitioners, then, do a balancing act between holding on to their own culture while simultaneously entering into another. In no way do we wish readers to assume their culture and background are expendable—or even subject to change. But, in our experience, once a person opens her imagination and understanding up to multiple cultures, that person's original world view often does change as a result.
PART II:

Community Development Processes
Communication, Conflict, And Culture

In the following exchange between an American supervisor and a Greek employee, the supervisor wants the employee to participate in a decision. Neither are aware that outward participation (reflecting democratic values) is the norm in the United States, whereas respect for authority and obeying of orders is the norm in Greece.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spoken Words</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>American:</strong> How long will it take you to finish this report?</td>
<td><strong>American:</strong> I asked him to participate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Greek:</strong> I do not know. How long should it take?</td>
<td><strong>Greek:</strong> His behavior makes no sense.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>American:</strong> You are in the best position to analyze time requirements.</td>
<td><strong>American:</strong> He refuses to take responsibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Greek:</strong> 10 days.</td>
<td><strong>Greek:</strong> I asked him for an order.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>American:</strong> Take 15. You will do it in 15 days?</td>
<td><strong>American:</strong> I press him to take responsibility for his own actions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Greek:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Greek:</strong> What nonsense! I better give him an answer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>American:</strong> He lacks the ability to estimate time. This estimate is totally inadequate.</td>
<td><strong>American:</strong> I offer a contract.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Greek:</strong> These are my orders. 15 days.</td>
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In fact, the report needed 30 days. The Greek worked hard, but at the end of 15 day, he needed one more day's work.

American: Where is my report?  
Greek: It will be ready tomorrow.
American: But we agreed it would be ready today.
Greek: He is asking for the report.
American: I am making sure he fulfills his contract.
Greek: The report isn't ready.
Both: The report isn't ready.
American: I must teach him to fulfill a contract.
Greek: The stupid incompetent boss! Not only did he give me wrong orders, but he doesn't appreciate that I did a 30-day job in 16 days.

The Greek hands in his resignation. The American is surprised.

Greek: I can't work for such a man.

As the above scenario makes clear, communicating with people from other cultures can be exasperating and confusing. Yet such interactions bring exposures to other world views, ideas, and languages, and also give us new perspectives on our selves and our work.

**Communication and Language**

Just speaking a different language implies the need to shift perspectives. Language structures and forms, as well as reflects, the way we think. For example, cultures that see time as circular rather than linear are not apt to have grammatical constructions emphasizing cause and effect: "since," "because," "as a result of." In addition it's not possible to translate concepts simply by equating one word to another. You might say "chez moi" to capture the concept of "home," yet the French phrase refers only to physical location without the emotional resonances of the English. Do the French not have a concept of home? Well, of course they do, but it's arguably not the same as the English one. Language and culture alter it. This may shed some light on the difficulties that a person, say a Hmong entering the United States for the first time, has in trying to communicate her experience in English, or learn English at all.

As a result, intercultural communication requires patience and flexibility on the part of all involved.
Outward Communication Signals

Different expectations and communication styles are often not obvious. You will need a thorough understanding of the culture you’re working with to make headway in learning to interpret its characteristic communication signals. This involves not only incorporating appropriate forms of speech, dialect, and vocabulary for specific situations, but also recognizing the body language, intonation and other concrete signals that cue the listener or observer how to interpret what is being said. Obviously this is a tall order, considering the generally unconscious nature of communication, and especially, of nonverbal communication.

Yet practitioners can learn to minimize the chance for misunderstandings. Here are some pointers:

☞ People in your group are your best experts in matters of their culture and style of communication. Watch them and listen to them. If you have questions, ask them.

☞ Avoid slang and jargon, even with native English speakers. Remember that your English is not necessarily the same as that of people from London, Harlem, or corporate culture, for that matter.

☞ Avoid jokes, irony, allusions, and other complex forms that risk being misunderstood or unappreciated. Again, even responses like our sense of humor are culturally determined; what Americans find funny, Haitians (for example) might find offensive.

☞ Study non-verbal communication, both yours and that of the people you work with. If you think of eye contact as a way to express respect, recognize that it some cultures it may convey the opposite.

What message is being communicated by the body language in this picture?
Non-verbal Communication

Purpose: To help practitioners become aware of the many different forms of non-verbal communication. Non-verbal communication involves more than gestures; it also includes facial expressions, posture, personal space, and more.

Activity 1: This exercise can be done by yourself or with a group. First, write down your interpretations of the non-verbal signals communicated by each of the following scenarios:

An employee is sitting at a desk.
- What moods are reflected by an upright posture? Ramrod straight posture? Slouching? Feet on the desk?
- How does your interpretation change if you imagine the employee to be blue-collar vs. professional? Supposing it's not an employee, but the boss?

Two men embrace on the street and kiss.
- Lovers? Old friends? Brothers?
- What if it's two women? A man and a woman?
- How does your interpretation change if one is older than the other?

If you are in a group, go around and share each person's interpretations. How are people's observations similar? How are they different? Are there any patterns according to culture, age, sex, etc.?

Activity 2: For one whole day, try to observe your own body language: how you sit, lie, stand; what you do with your hands; how you use silence or pauses. It's hard to always be aware of this; get feedback from friends, or try videotaping yourself in front of a group.

- What emotions, status and other information do you communicate through the way you hold your body or present yourself?
- How might people of other cultures interpret this?
- What other kinds of nonverbal communication can you think of?
Communication and Cultural Values

But body language, intonation, and word/dialect choice are just outward physical manifestations of a host of inner beliefs, feelings, and expectations of the speaker. As discussed earlier, these are culturally determined. The value placed on truth, consensus, social positioning, and performance in any given culture effects how spoken and written communication is presented. In hierarchical societies, people tend to speak conscious of their position in the structure: priests speak differently than parishioners, Laotian elders speak differently than teenagers. In cultures where people expect debate, the intent of communication is very different than in those where consensus is the norm.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Emphasis of Communication*</th>
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<td><strong>In Cultures Valuing...</strong></td>
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<td>STYLE</td>
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<td>INTENT</td>
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<td>STRUCTURE</td>
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Speech

Oral communication also reflects different cultural priorities. Americans value honesty, directness, and self-disclosure. They expect people to be concise, to the point, and to say what they mean. They do not like people to beat around the bush or to make them guess what others are thinking; that is interpreted as evasive or indecisive. Other cultures, however, place more value on tact, face-saving, and showing respect to one's social superiors. They might rely heavily on innuendo, body language, or use of the abstract third person (as opposed to "you" or "I"), to express what they really mean.

Still other cultures, like that of African Americans, may use speech as a form of performance or artistic expression as well as communication. Storytelling, in such a setting, is used to entertain while at the same time (eventually) getting a point across. These cultures would perceive more direct communication as lacking in grace and sophistication.

**Guidelines to Communication Styles**

Practitioners need to remember that in any given newcomer group, several sets of rules or communication styles may be present according to the various social groups present and people's degree of cross-cultural adaptation. Once you are aware of this, you can identify these differences and use them to the group's advantage. Here are some norms to look for to help you identify different styles of communication:*  

- What formalities are observed? Who opens and closes the meeting, and how?  
- Where do people of different status sit?  
- How are topics introduced? By going straight to the point? By careful indirection?  
- Which topics are introduced first?  
- What irrelevant topics are introduced? Are they really irrelevant?  
- How do people get permission—or find an opening—to speak?  
- How long does it typically take the group to decide on something? What is the process for coming to a decision?  
- How do people express their dissatisfaction with another group member?  
- What kinds of decisions are made outside the meeting? Where, how, and by whom are they made?  
- How much time (if any) do people wait before speaking after others have spoken? Is interruption permissible?  
- How do people respond to silence?  

Purpose: To help practitioners become aware of the many different styles of communicating information.

Activity: By yourself or as part of a group, read the following. What do you think is actually being communicated? How would you categorize each of these communication styles? What values are implied by them?

P. says, "Well, watching TV, that's a good way to learn about this country, and I know the children like it...and J. and T. both have one, and they still go to temple...though not as much as they used to...."

A. loses her patience with her friend, and says, "Stop whistling! You're driving me crazy!"

C., talking to his sponsor, says, "I once heard how someone brought over his cousin without telling anyone...."

T., with her colleagues, points to a graph and says, "As I've shown earlier, this lack of funding causes an overall shortage of...."

P. talking with others, says, "I don't know, supposing, we had a space we could rent, maybe everyone could put in some money for it...or maybe it's better to stay where we are...."

J. says, "and THEN, what do you think happened? Welll I'll tell you something, I've NEVER seen anything like it!!"

G. asking his dad advice about starting a farm, receives this reply: "When I was your age, I asked my dad the same question, and he told me..."
Sayback: Learning To Hear Each Other

Purpose: To improve listening techniques.

Activity: This is a time-honored technique in counseling and teaching, wherever it's important to be sure you've really heard what the other person is trying to say, not what you think he or she is saying. It can be particularly useful as a communication check in a multi-cultural group.

Put people into pairs. Have one person be the "talker" and the other be the "listener." Whatever the talker says, the listener then simply "says back" (though not in the same words) whatever he/she hears: "I hear you saying you can't find a job because you don't understand the want ads. Is that right?" The speaker may then say "yes," and go on, or maybe he says, "No, not exactly. I'm saying...."

After 5 or 10 minutes have the pairs switch roles. As a follow-up, have each pair talk to the whole group about their observations.
Power Issues In Communication

Who gets heard?

If a group effort is truly collaborative, all people involved need room to express their ideas and perspectives. Often, because of social conditioning, we are most able to "hear" people who are similar to ourselves. We find people from backgrounds similar to our own most easy to understand, agree with, and listen to. If nothing else, this should cue us into the absolute necessity of being aware of our own cultural and social background.

Did we really disagree with that speaker the other night? Or was it more something in the way he presented himself, more something about who he was, that made us not listen?

Additionally, people with high status we often perceive as having something worthy to say. TV advertisers have long exploited this, for example in having an actor play the role of "doctor" to promote a certain medication. This tendency becomes a self-fulfilling process: because people with low status are not listened to, their particular speech patterns become associated with low status. Even when in positions of power, a person with a certain accent will often be dismissed by the dominant majority. In the same way, people of the dominant culture develop authoritative ways of speaking even when they yield no power or authority.

As practitioners, we need to be aware of such power imbalances when working with groups, particularly if they are from a culture subordinate to our own or to mainstream culture. They may not immediately say what they feel, or challenge us if they think we are wrong, or give any other indication that they are not in complete agreement with us. Unless we are vigilant, we will often have the last word or be perceived as having all the answers. One of our most difficult tasks is to let our authority go in order to draw out (and understand!) the ideas of others.

Stereotyping

As we have pointed out, intercultural communication is often fraught with misunderstandings, assumptions, judgments, and anxiety. Even among people of similar background, the urge to dismiss what we do not understand as irrelevant or to attribute it to stupidity appears to be a universal human trait. Imagine when this happens between people of different backgrounds! Communicating with people of other cultures is like playing a game with someone who learned by different rules. Since the players are often unaware of these different rules, we blame the ensuing chaos on the other person's dishonesty, incompetence, or on our perceptions of how members of his or her race, social group, ethnicity, etc., usually act.

This is, of course, what stereotyping is all about. When someone in our own group does something that we perceive as stupid, we say, "that person is stupid." But when someone of another group does it, we say, "those people are stupid (or
rude, or childish...)." This is called "intergroup posturing", and is most pronounced between groups having a wide power discrepancy or history of dominance and subjugation. It's further accentuated when obvious visible or otherwise perceptible differences exist between the groups, such as in clothing, skin color, accents, etc.

More MISSED, MIXED, and MISUNDERSTOOD Messages

Here are seven scenarios illustrating common problems in intercultural communication. How often have you experienced them yourself?

1. Someone you meet begins preaching to you about a topic on which you are an expert. You modestly try to express your own ideas (when you can get a word in edgewise), but cannot seem to make yourself understood. The other person does not even seem to be trying, she is so sure that she is the expert.

2. You are talking with someone you’ve met about a topic which you know a great deal about. The other person does not seem to know that much about it, but you later find out from a friend that he is a recognized expert on the subject! You are embarrassed, and a bit resentful that he did not reveal his expertise during your conversation.

*Issue:* Communication involves constant guessing. We depend on certain oral or visual cues to let us know where our listeners stand in relation to what we are saying. We expect "experts" to behave in a confident, authoritative manner. When they don’t we feel misled. As a result we may underestimate what quiet, unassertive, or low-status people have to say. In addition, we do not always pay attention to how our words come across. These misunderstandings are exacerbated by conflicting styles of communication.

3. You have (finally) a person of color on your committee. You want to be sure that each perspective is included, so you go out of your way to ask her what people of her group think. She does not, however, seem to want to participate much.

4. You are new to a group, and the only Latino/Mormon/single parent/etc. Everyone else, when they pay attention to you at all, wants you to share "the Latin American (or whatever) perspective" on each issue. You do not feel comfortable speaking for an entire culture!
Issue: We perceive people of our own social groups as individuals, whereas we often perceive people of other social groups as representatives of their groups. Though we certainly wish to acknowledge and tap the cultural knowledge that someone from a different group brings to us, we don't want to do so at expense of his/her individuality.

5. There is a person who recently immigrated from another country in your school or workplace. You'd like to get to know him, but you're not sure how he will respond to personal questions. Besides, you don't want to embarrass him by initiating in-depth discussions in a language that he is still struggling with. That would just be frustrating to both of you.

6. You have just arrived in the country, and you'd like to make some friends and improve your language skills. Everyone seems very friendly initially, but no one ever engages you in conversations that go beyond pleasantries. It's very frustrating.

7. You are doing a survey on domestic violence, and asking personal questions of women in a low-income neighborhood. This is fairly straightforward, as you are a skilled interviewer. It suddenly becomes difficult, however, when you must ask a professional woman (like yourself) whether she has ever been battered. You can't imagine her as a battered wife, and it is embarrassing to have to ask.

Issue: Intimacy in communication is influenced by cultural differences and our perceptions of others. Americans often shy away from situations that might embarrass either participant by pointing up one or the other's lack of fluency or understanding. Here is where they get concerned with “saving face.”

Yet, we also use differences in culture or status to desensitize us to another person's dignity or hurt. It's easier to be sensitive to someone's privacy when they are like ourselves. And it's also harder to acknowledge that problems we perceive as belonging to other cultures, social classes, etc., affect someone like ourselves. Not only is it embarrassing to ask an equal about battering, it's also threatening because we can't rationalize it away by attributing it to cultural difference. If she could be battered, so could we.
Role of the Practitioner

There are as many different communication styles as there are cultures and sub-cultures. It is important not just to recognize these differences, but to accept, appreciate, and learn from them. Together with the group, decide what rules will work best in your collaboration. Or you may decide to accommodate several sets of rules, or even all rules.

As a final thought, you should realize that much of human communication is very deeply rooted, complex, and beyond awareness. In the short time that you may work with a group, it is unlikely that you will easily teach yourself, or even come to an understanding of, the many subtleties of a particular culture. In your own interaction with the group, it may be best to adapt the communication styles of collective groups: express yourself without coming to a conclusion or trying to prove a point, leaving room for others to have their say.
Cultural Foundations to Decision Making

All organizations or communities need the ability to make good decisions to be effective. But groups differ in the methods and approaches that they use. Some may spend long hours discussing what procedure to use to make certain decisions, while others may allow decisions to evolve. Different decision-making approaches could include discussion, consensus, majority rule, entrusting decisions to leaders, and meditation.

Like other processes addressed in this manual, decision-making is often culturally-determined. For example, westerners may assume that decisions are consciously made by a person, organization, or political or social system. Non-western cultures might be more apt to see decisions as simply occurring. Decisions might emerge naturally from a series of events, or grow from the bottom of an organization until the top leaders acknowledge and formalize them. In some cultures, the concept of choice may not exist at all, or may be overridden by a concept of fate. In that case, the norm might be to let whatever happens happen. Our earlier discussion of world views in Chapter 1 elaborates some of these cultural foundations to beliefs.

Different cultural values are implied by various approaches to the decision-making process. The chart below gives a simplified view of this correspondence. Please remember that the cultural values indicated below reflect only one aspect of a particular culture, rather than defining it. In addition, the oppositions implied by the categories (individual vs. group, top-down vs. bottom-up, etc.) reflect two poles of what in real life is actually a spectrum of possibilities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decision made by</th>
<th>individual</th>
<th>group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural values:</td>
<td>independence</td>
<td>interdependence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>individualism</td>
<td>collectivism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decision-maker</th>
<th>takes personal responsibility</th>
<th>shares responsibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural values:</td>
<td>individualism</td>
<td>collectivism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>personal control/choice</td>
<td>group control/less choice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As an example, in mainstream American culture, the value placed on individualism and self-reliance favors a leader who has the capacity to direct and take personal responsibility for her or his decisions. The leader might use several methods with varying degrees of input from other people, but throughout the process it is still her responsibility to make the decision. Individualism also implies the importance of democratic representation for every person.

As practitioners, then, it would be useful to explore the perceptions of the group you work with: how do they make decisions? Or do they see decisions as "made" at all? It's also useful to explore how your own cultural values affect the kind of decision-making process you're comfortable with. If you are aware of your own preferences, you can avoid unconsciously reinforcing them among groups who naturally gravitate toward a different method.
**EXERCISE**

**Culture and Decision-Making: How We Decide**

**Purpose:** To help practitioners explore important attitudes and world views that influence making decisions.

**Activity:** Read the following statements and circle whether you agree or disagree with them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I have control over many day-to-day events happening in my life.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. It's important to plan for next year.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I have no way of predicting what will happen to me today or next year.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Time will take care of almost everything.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. If I want to do something, there's a pretty good chance I will do it.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. It's best to leave decisions up to the authorities or experts.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. When it comes to making decisions, two heads are better than one.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The people really know the best direction for them to go in; it's just up to authorities to see what that is and support it.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9. Everyone should take time to inform themselves about issues so they can have an educated opinion about them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

10. Everyone has a duty to help make community/state/national decisions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

11. Once you make a decision, you shouldn't back away from it or change it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

12. Discussion is well and good, but, in the end, whoever's in charge has to make the decision.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

13. There's always some people in a group who lose out when a decision gets made.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

14. It's the group's responsibility to consider the needs of all members when making a decision.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

15. Everyone should have the chance to be heard on all issues.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

16. Decisions or opinions held by a majority of people usually reflect what's best for society.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

- What kinds of patterns do you see emerging from your answers?
- Can you tie this in with your cultural beliefs?
- Try this out with your group. How are their answers different or similar to yours? To each other's?
Methods Of Decision Making

Groups make decisions in many ways. Each method can be appropriate depending on the culture and circumstances of the group, and each has particular consequences for how the group operates. Which method gets used depends on:

- the type of decisions to be made: trivial or important? Long-term or short-term? Affecting people or just physical resources?
- the amount of time and resources available;
- the culture and past history of the group;
- the climate the group wishes to establish. Do we want to encourage the participation, creativity, and spontaneity that come from a group-oriented process? Or do we want to emphasize the efficiency, focus, and loyalty coming from a more autocratic one?
- the socio-cultural context in which the group exists: How do decisions need to be tailored in order to be acceptable to the dominant culture?

The Decision-Making Continuum

Making decisions range from autocratic events with a single person having total control to participatory processes with everyone having equal input. Here is a break-down of common methods:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authoritarian</th>
<th>Individual makes decision for group without discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expert is called in to make decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individual makes decision after discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Committee is formed to make decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic/ Participatory</td>
<td>Group votes on a decision (majority rule)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group comes to a consensus for a decision</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discuss this continuum with your group.

- Where do they see themselves fitting?
- Does this agree with your own observations of them?
- What about your own decision-making style? Where does it fit in?
A Peace Corps volunteer working in Benin, West Africa, witnessed the following exchange among a circle of women. Women of all ages were represented, though most were married with children. In response to a question from the volunteer requiring a decision on the group's part, one of the older women initiated a discussion with the others in the local language which the volunteer could not understand. Apparently in no particular order, many women spoke up without obviously being called on. Of the 15 or 20 present, about five discussed particular points at length, asking questions and offering suggestions. At no time did their intonation or body language communicate a sense of debate or competition; rather it seemed obvious that everyone—even those who stayed silent—were intent on an exchange of ideas. After about two minutes, everyone in the circle began nodding their heads; no one abstained. At that point, the older woman announced the decision to the volunteer.

- How dependent on hierarchy do you think this decision-making process was?
- Who, if anyone, was in charge?
- What kind of decision-making process do you think this represented?
- What cultural values are reflected in the way the group operated?
- What similarities do you see in how the group you work with operates? What differences?

 Transitional Issues In Decision-Making

Multiple and/or Conflicting Processes in Decision-Making

To help your group explore the ways in which they make decisions, compare the norms of their traditional culture to the circumstances they find themselves in now. As newcomers, their current decision-making process is likely to contain elements of old and new cultures. In addition, you shouldn't assume because they have common backgrounds and experience as refugees and immigrants that that they are culturally identical. As discussed in Chapter 1, even in a homogenous group you will find variations in language, education, social class, etc., as well as (of course) individual differences.
Therefore, their decision-making process may not be consistent, or even identifiable as one method or another. Indeed, you may see two or three different methods present in group interactions, perhaps interfering with each other. On some occasions, stresses resulting from different cultural values and backgrounds may shut down the decision-making process of the group entirely. When groups cannot overcome their internal differences, they get stuck. You can work out these issues by reviewing the "Power Flower" exercise in Chapter 1, as well as Chapter 2, "Cross-Cultural Adaptation." Then negotiate with your group a way that every member can be equally heard.

**Exploring Multiple Decision-Making Processes**

Here are some questions that you can use to start the group thinking:

- What do I understand by decision-making here in the United States?
- Is there any equivalent concept of it in my culture?

If yes: What is the concept?
  - How is it different?
  - How is it similar?

If no: How were decisions made in my family and community at home?
  - Who made them?
  - Who had the most power to decide in my community at home?
  - What was their role?
  - What do I value about the way decisions were made in my family and community?
The Changing Decision-Making Process

How does your group/community make decisions now? How did they at home?

**Purpose:** To help practitioners understand how the decision-making process of their group or community has changed.

**Activity:** Read the following statements, then check which descriptor in the right-hand column applies:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Now</th>
<th>At Home</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Decisions are made by one person.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decisions are made by a group.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Leader directs what happens.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader lets the group do what it wants.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Leader decides what to discuss.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anyone can bring up an issue.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Leader is personally responsible for everything.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group shares responsibility for the decision.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Important issues are not discussed.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important issues are discussed by everyone.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Now</td>
<td>At Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ALWAYS</td>
<td>USUALLY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Only immediate problems are decided about.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future problems are planned for.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Decisions are made quickly.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decisions are deliberated over for a long time.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. When deciding, people rely on facts to figure out the best course of action.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When deciding, people rely on what's happened in the past, or on moral or religious concerns to guide them.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discuss what patterns you see coming from this exercise:

- What similarities does your group find between the way they made decisions back home to the way they make them now?

- What differences? How do they explain these differences?

- Are there new cultural values reflected in how they make decisions now?

- What traditional values are reflected in the elements of decision-making that have not changed?

- What traditional elements of decision-making does your group wish to preserve?

- What are the strengths/weaknesses of their traditional methods here in the United States?

- What elements might they be willing to change if it would benefit them in the new country?
In discussing the questions in the above exercise, talk to your group about the possibility of using traditional methods in some situations and new methods in others. Just as people use different tools depending on the job, so people can also use different "cultural tools" depending on the circumstance. Perhaps the group could use new methods only when it interacts with mainstream organizations or communities. Perhaps some circumstances within the ethnic community itself might be better addressed using new methods. It's important to stress that by accepting a non-traditional decision-making method the group does not have to accept the mainstream cultural values associated with it.

**Decision-Making Interventions**

**Sharing Your Observations**

If, after exploring your group's decision-making process, you think it is interfering with some or all of the group's goals and operation, you may want to address the issue with the members.

Remember the group may be unaware of how its decision making effects an outcome, or may not see it as something under human control, or may not see its process objectively. Certainly organizations in the United States are often unaware of the true way in which they come to decisions. A company may be proud of how it solicits worker opinions and suggestions, but only consider those that agree with ideas already held by management. You need considerable knowledge of the group's culture to express your concerns in a culturally-sensitive manner, one that assumes no blame and that they will listen to. Particularly with newcomer groups, it may help to frame the issue in terms of the cross-cultural adaptation that they are going through as they alter old methods to fit a new environment or seek new methods altogether.
What Is Conflict?

Conflict is a frequent result whenever two unlike cultures interact. It can be defined as a state of intense antagonism between two or more parties having incompatible goals, needs, desires, values, beliefs, or attitudes. Together with language barriers and prejudice, these differences cause small misunderstandings to escalate into more serious problems.

Even within a seemingly homogenous group, different views and priorities cause problems. Businesses have ongoing internal friction between their purchasing and services divisions, between workers and management; governments have friction between the military and the civilian branches, between conservatives and liberals. Even individuals struggle with competing internal goals and priorities. Used constructively, though, conflicts can be the lifeblood and creative energy in any organization, community, or culture.

Conflict serves two important functions that are particularly relevant to the situation of newcomers:

1. **As a mechanism of change.** By loosening old structures and beliefs, conflict opens the door to creative solutions and new outlooks, as well as energizing the culture.

2. **As an integrative force.** Conflict can help a cultural group pull back into a meaningful whole. With an external force, conflict can reinforce group identity and cohesiveness; internal conflict directly addressed and resolved also will have the effect of pulling the group closer together.

Openly and appropriately expressed, conflict helps a cultural group under stress grow and develop. It thus is an integral part of the newcomer's process of cross-cultural adaptation.

Attitudes Toward Conflict

People have different orientations toward conflict. Some see it as basically negative, interrupting the normal flow of life. These people avoid it, unless there is no getting around it. Others see it as a positive, normally occurring event. Individuals with this orientation engage in confrontation regularly, enjoy it, and have well established routines for dealing with it. Still others fall somewhere in between: conflict can either be positive or negative depending on the context.
Different cultural values are reflected in these attitudes. Since much of the western world view hinges on order and rationality, it's not surprising that conflict might be viewed as dangerous and disruptive. With its roots in emotion and the irrational, conflict challenges a western sense of order. In contrast, eastern cultures with their intuitive, holistic world views are much more comfortable with spontaneity, organic process, and irrationality. For these reasons, conflict may be less threatening to them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude</th>
<th>Culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negative &amp; Disruptive</td>
<td><strong>North Americans:</strong> avoid or work through as quickly as possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive &amp; Normal</td>
<td><strong>Chinese:</strong> encourage and enjoy negotiations in business, well-practiced in conflict management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td><strong>French:</strong> conflict can be positive, negative, or neutral depending how it is handled and the circumstance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that attitudes toward conflict can vary according to the situation. For example, it could be argued that Americans tend to encourage a degree of conflict in the business world that could be compared to the Chinese above; that is seen as being assertive and competitive. However, in personal life, the dominant Anglo-Saxon norm is to avoid confrontation and direct expression of needs and feelings.

Identifying Different Approaches to Conflict in a Newcomer Group

Purpose: To help groups become aware of different attitudes towards conflict.

Activity: Have each member of your group think about what attitudes toward conflict their family or community had in the old country. If the group can write, ask them to take five minutes or so to jot this down in as much detail as possible. Then ask them to write about how they resolve conflicts now.

If the group is relatively homogenous with respect to status and power, go around and have the members read what they wrote, or at least sum it up for the group. If there are wide differences in members' level of empowerment, divide them into "friendly" focus groups composed of people of like status and power. Then have each focus group share with the whole their general impressions. You as practitioner should take notes on a blackboard or newsprint of the general drift.

Talk about it:

- Were members surprised at each other's responses?
- How similar were the responses?
- Can the group tie in their responses with values in their traditional culture or the new culture? (Why didn't people express anger? Why do the young people today shout at their parents?)
- What differences do you all see between how conflicts were dealt with in the old country and here?
- How would you tie in the current conflicts with the newcomer experience?
- Can you see any patterns between the different answers and a member's age, education level, social group, etc.?
Conflict Resolution

But don't confuse a group's attitude toward conflict in general with the actual way they resolve it. Some cultures, valuing order and calm, may avoid conflict by repressing discontent until it explodes in a violent confrontation. The British or Anglo-Americans, who often deal with interpersonal friction through silence, may have infrequent confrontations. But when confrontations finally do occur, they tend to be more serious.

Others, like the Chinese with well-established ways of diffusing and managing conflict, may have more frequent, but less violent, confrontations. Since new conflicts always arise to take the place of the old, the Chinese see this as a process where conflicts are never truly resolved. Some conflict is always occurring or about to occur.

We can identify two principle elements in the way people resolve conflict:

1. **Assertiveness**: a willingness to satisfy one's own needs; and

2. **Cooperativeness**: a willingness to satisfy the concerns of the other party in the conflict.

Between these two agendas—looking out for yourself and looking out for the other person—is a range of possible resolution styles:

Methods of Conflict Resolution

![Diagram of Methods of Conflict Resolution]

- **High Assertiveness**
  - Negotiation
  - Coercion or Competition

- **Low Assertiveness**
  - Compliance
  - Manipulation or Avoidance

**High Cooperation**

**Low Cooperation**
These methods can be roughly associated with different cultures:

- **Chinese**: Competing—there is always a winner and loser in negotiations; someone always loses face.

- **American**: Negotiating—a moderate mix of assertiveness and cooperation is the natural and ethical way to do business.

- **Japanese**: Negotiating—solutions come through consensus of all involved.

- **Mexican**: Competing—personal honor is at stake. If they back off their position or compromise, they will lose honor.

- **Hmong**: Avoidance—conflict may go away if they ignore it; fate will decide the outcome no matter what anyone does.

- **Male culture**: Competing and/or Negotiating—direct, forceful expression of needs, reasoned negotiations

- **Female culture**: Acquiescence or Avoidance—indirect manipulation of conflict, low concern with self coupled with high concern for other party

- **Urban culture**: Competing, Coercive, or Avoidance—direct confrontation often with little concern for the other party (often a stranger)

- **Rural culture**: Negotiating—direct or indirect confrontation with concern for all involved (usually parties know each other)

Different cultures also vary in how they determine when a conflict is over. Think of your own culture. Is conflict over when

- the needs of one party are satisfied?

- the needs of both parties are satisfied?

- when open hostilities cease regardless if a resolution has been found?

* expanded from Kilman and Thomas
Conflict Resolution and Power

Conflict resolution styles relate to power issues. Disempowered populations such as women, African Americans, and newcomers will tend to have a less assertive, less direct methods of seeking solutions when interacting with more powerful groups. Women have often been accused of being manipulative, but what better way to get what they want without directly confronting the power and authority of men? Why do men have any need to be manipulative if they can get what they want simply by asking or demanding it?

In cultures with strong hierarchical structures this also may occur between people at different levels. Vietnamese often use tact and innuendo when addressing conflicts as a result of years of living under autocratic regimes. People working or dependent on large institutions may develop manipulative, but bureaucratically "correct," ways of forcing a resolution in the direction they want.

Conflict and Newcomers

Newcomers groups have a particularly complex experience of conflict. Three important factors influence this experience:

1. **Conflict with the dominant culture.** Whether or not they embrace American culture or fight to maintain their own, they are placed in a position of tension.

2. **Conflict within the group.** This may arise from the different stages of members' cross-cultural adaptation.

3. **Diminished ability to address conflict.** Varying attitudes toward conflict and varying methods of resolution among group members can confuse a group’s ability to move through a conflict.

Younger members, adapting American ways, may be more assertive, aggressive, or democratic in how they try to resolve friction within the group. Older members may continue to seek the advice of traditional authorities, or may try to avoid or manipulate the situation rather than confronting it directly.
In a Laotian-American community, the president of a mutual assistance association was picked by a few older members rather than by a more democratic process. It seemed clear to everyone that the elders and the president had collaborated in engineering his appointment. In Laos, this autocratic method might be expected. But the younger, American-educated members of the organization were very unhappy about it. They wanted to institute a democratic process, but didn't know how to express their objections without seeming disrespectful of their elders. They tried talking privately to the president without success. Finally, a few young leaders made the issue public, confronting the president and the elders who appointed him at a meeting.

In the dialogue that ensued, both sides shared their perspectives. No resolution was arrived at, but several weeks later the president withdrew, and the young leaders initiated a more democratic election.

- Who won? Who lost? Or was the outcome neutral?
- What different conflict resolution styles do you see in this scenario?
- Would you classify any of these styles as traditional? As American? As transitional?
- What do you suppose was the experience of the elders in this episode? The experience of the young leaders?

In the above scenario, the different approaches to resolving the conflict were themselves a factor in aggravating it. The young leaders' confrontation was a public (and embarrassing) challenge to the authority and respect of the elders. On the other hand, the elders' covert actions showed a disregard for the opinions and desires of other members of the organization.

For us as practitioners, it's critical to recognize and understand these different approaches in the groups we work with if we are to use them creatively. Here is an exercise to help us and the group identify conflict resolution styles present:
Identifying Methods of Conflict Resolution: Role-Playing

**Purpose:** To help practitioners identify methods currently used by the group as well as ones they might want to adapt.

**Activity:** This exercise involves playing out an actual or imagined conflict. In the case of an actual conflict within the group, doing this can help resolve it, particularly when the group is from a culture where expressing dissatisfaction is discouraged. Role-playing offers people a safe, creative way of working through issues they might not otherwise be willing to talk about.

Juanita recently has immigrated from Puerto Rico. She is worried about the conditions of her apartment. There's paint peeling off the walls and the stairs up to the apartment have rotten boards. It's not safe for her two children, ages three and five. She's very upset and angry, but she's afraid to complain to the landlord; she had such a hard time finding anywhere to live because people associated Puerto Ricans with crime and loud music. She's heard stories about how the landlord never fixes anything. If people complain too much, who knows what he might do?

Have people in the group take turns playing different roles: Juanita, the landlord, the lawyer, the people at the Tenants' Organization, the neighbors offering suggestions. Try to emphasize the different styles of working through a conflict that they might see in a mainstream male landlord versus a single young newcomer mother, in an American businessman versus a Latina.

Afterwards discuss what happened.

- What solutions do different actors offer to Juanita?
- What different ways of approaching the conflict did people take?
- How does the group's culture define the way people played their role?
- Can you as practitioner demonstrate some alternative styles to the group?

This same exercise can also be done using drawings or fotonovelas to recount a story, or through more formal theater: puppets or plays.
Conflict Mediation

Conflicts often require a mediator to help resolve them. The leader of any group may be called in to resolve differences between two factions; or an outside party can mediate when there is no clear-cut authority over the two. In our work with newcomers, mediation is one of our most important jobs. Particularly when lines of authority have broken or are in the process of breaking down, newcomers may no longer trust their traditional avenues of mediation: the church or temple, village elders, officials elected in the old country, people educated in the old country.

Under these circumstances, practitioners may need to fill in the gap, to offer impartial (or reasonably so) advice to help the two or more discordant factions come to a better understanding and agreement. For this reason, it's critical for you to understand why the conflict is occurring and the different priorities at stake in order to guide the group toward a solution that is in everyone's best interest.

Ask yourself:

☞ Why is the conflict occurring?

☞ How much is it a result of the cross-cultural adaptation process?

☞ What would be the traditional way of solution?

☞ Is that viable now? Why not?

☞ Does the traditional way take into consideration the needs of all parties, regardless of power or status?

☞ What would be the effect of introducing a non-traditional solution? Of upsetting the traditional power balance?
MEDIATION in a Newcomer Group

The same Laotian mutual assistance association (MAA) mentioned above was later called in to mediate a dispute between two Buddhist Societies in the community. At first there had only been one society, but they took so long to start a temple-building project that a group of monks broke away to start a new society. The second group advocated building a simpler, less expensive temple. Meanwhile, funds raised from the community had already been spent by the first group.

Because the community had no clear-cut leader, the Buddhist societies solicited help from the new MAA president (this one elected democratically) though he was much younger than the monks. Though the president tried hard to balance both groups, in the end, neither would heed his advice because of his age. Instead, the monks withdrew and became disgruntled with the MAA.

Think about why this mediation attempt failed.

• Was the president’s age really the issue?

• Can you point to other transitional issues that are significant?

• What were the expectations on both sides?
"I learned that there is so much to be done to lift ourselves and our communities out of the chaos of contemporary American life. . . . I found that I had a role in my community—to be a leader."

(Newcomer university student)

"No one really has the quality of leadership anymore...."

(Cambodian elder in America)

Models of Leadership

Leadership varies from culture to culture, group to group, and situation to situation. Cultures with hierarchical structures usually have more authoritarian, directive leaders; while cultures with collaborative structures might have less directive, more delegating leaders. Newcomer groups undergoing the process of cross-cultural adaptation described in Chapter 2 often lie somewhere between these two poles.

As a practitioner, it will help to explore with the group you work with where it falls in the continuum between authoritarian and collaborative leadership. You may find the group reflects a number of leadership models. Some people may be more comfortable operating within a clearly-defined social hierarchy, where the practitioner, for example, functions as a traditional teacher rather than as a facilitator. Other groups may not want a high level of direction and function better when given free reign over their agenda. Though one of these models is clearly more democratic than the other, neither is "better." Depending on the specific situation and where the group is in its cross-cultural adaptation, one will be more useful than the other at any given time.

Situational Leadership

Hersey & Blanchard* contend that different situations call for different leadership styles. They describe four basic types: directing, coaching, supporting, and delegating. Keep in mind that the motivation levels described below are not only an index of a group's willingness to work or desire for autonomy. Rather, motivation can be a reflection of their confidence in their ability to effect change, or their conviction that the change is in their best interest.

Different individuals (and cultures) will gravitate toward one or more of these styles, but all four may be used within any one group or culture, depending on the situation and the developing expertise and need of the people involved. For this reason this model is known as "situational leadership."
**EXERCISE**

**Getting the Ball Rolling: How to Recognize Leaders**

**Purpose:** To help identify the kind of leadership present in a group.

**Activity:** This exercise requires a ball of string. Get the group discussing an issue. As you speak, take one end of the string. As other people join in, pass the ball to them. If one person opens or closes a discussion, makes or solicits a remark, the ball goes back to him or her; each time someone else speaks it goes to them.

It's easy to imagine the tangle that happens after a few minutes. And you probably can imagine the difference between the spider web coming from a group with a directive leader compared to one coming from a group that operates democratically.

This exercise is particularly effective in spotlighting the people who really dominate discussion, whether or not they are recognized as leaders.

- What surprises came out of doing this exercise?
- Who are the leaders?
- What is expected of them? What do they expect of others?
- What kinds of support or direction do they give?
- What kind of leader did you discover yourself to be?
- How are you perceived by the group as a leader?

**Note:** This exercise also reveals the different roles that people play in communication, regardless of whether or not they function as leaders. Some people, for example, ask guiding questions, others summarize or clarify, while still others may offer solutions or new ideas. A complete discussion of these ideas can be found in Chapter 5, "Communication."
Formal Versus Informal Leaders

When we think about leaders, we often think about people who hold formal positions of authority in governments or organizations (mayors, presidents, supervisors...). Certainly in the United States, people are taught to respect those who have come into positions of leadership through formal channels. This reflects a cultural bias favoring order and documentable process.

In other cultures, however, traditional leaders, such as village elders or people who evolve into leadership positions through knowledge or actions, may command more respect than formal government representatives. In fact, every community has individuals who are looked up to as leaders, regardless of their jobs. For example, despite the high degree of authority enjoyed by teachers in some Arab societies, they still need to be careful about challenging or criticizing students who have emerged as leaders in the classroom. Otherwise, teachers risk damaging their own authority and control of the class. In the United States, informal leaders can take the form of local store owners active in neighborhood issues, or college students spearheading an anti-war protest. As practitioners, we need to learn who are the informal as well as the formal leaders in any community.

Las MADRES...

In Argentina, a group of mothers whose sons and daughters had vanished under a repressive regime protested the disappearances, embarrassing the government. These became known as "Las Madres." As women (particularly as women in a Latino culture), they belonged to a subordinate social group that gave them little recognized political power. As grieving mothers, however, they held considerable emotional power stemming from the culture's deep-rooted respect of motherhood and family. Because of this, they became informal leaders, persuading others to listen to them, as well as enjoying a certain immunity from retribution by the government.

- Can you name the formal leaders in your community?
- What about informal leaders?
- Why are they accepted as leaders? Through vote? Through some superior achievement or skill? Through force of character?
- Who recognizes them as leaders?
Characteristics of Leadership

What makes a leader a leader?

"Be a leader!"
"Leadership by example."
"Anyone can grow up to be president!"

Most people in the United States have heard these sayings, which reflect an American ideal that leadership can be learned, as long as someone acquires the necessary skills. Other cultures may believe that some people are born into leadership and others are not. Still others view leadership as a quality developed gradually with age, along with wisdom. In many—if not most—cultures, one's class, ethnic group or occupation often is a determining factor in who is chosen to be leaders, at least on the formal level. Yet probably the most important characteristic of leaders in any culture, in fact, is that they are perceived as such.

Cultural Values

The characteristics valued in leaders reflect the culture of the country or community involved. In the United States, for example, people expect leaders to be assertive, efficient, and decisive, reflecting their focus on action, control, and the belief that complex situations can be reduced to single responses. At the same time, reflecting democratic values, they expect leaders to listen to constituencies, to be persuasive, educated, and base decisions on rational deliberation. Protestant values of hard work and moral integrity—in thought and action, and in public and private life—also affect how Americans evaluate leaders.

But more collaborative cultures may seek leaders skilled in facilitation and listening, who can enhance the networks holding the community together, rather than people able to make quick decisions. Other cultures may be totally unconcerned with a leader's private morals as long as he or she performs the public office well. The French have long been amused at the American preoccupation with presidential candidates' sex lives, for example. On the other extreme, religious or sexual morality may be of prime importance in theocracies such as Iran.

Here is an exercise to help you and the group you work with think about concepts of leadership:
Leadership Qualities

**Purpose:** To help identify what leadership qualities group members think are important.

**Activity:** Rank the following skills and attributes 1 through 3 according to how important you think they are in a leader:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. critical</th>
<th>2. useful, but not critical</th>
<th>3. unimportant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>___ age</td>
<td>___ status</td>
<td>___ social skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ mediation skills</td>
<td>___ knowledge</td>
<td>___ energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ organizational skill</td>
<td>___ charisma</td>
<td>___ tact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ ability to plan</td>
<td>___ sense of responsibility</td>
<td>___ education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ decision-making ability</td>
<td>___ respect</td>
<td>___ service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ fairness</td>
<td>___ technical knowledge /ability</td>
<td>___ compassion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___ family background</td>
<td>___ social group identity</td>
<td>___ political affiliation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Add your own ....

---

Talk with your group about their answers to this exercise.

- What patterns do you see emerging in your answers?
- What cultural values are reflected in your (their) answers?
- Are there patterns in who agrees with whom?
- What implications can you draw from differences within the group?
Changing Roles

Newcomers are people in transition, experiencing huge changes in their lives, perceptions, and even in their identities. As they go through the process of cross-cultural adaptation, they lose the stability of the culture they have always known. Instead, their culture may become shifting and fragmented as a result of pressures from the new dominant mainstream cultures. Their very sense of identity also may change, in the adjustment to becoming a minority in a strange country. Children of newcomers may have to learn to be Hmong at home, for example, and American in school. Hence, during this transition phase, newcomer communities may experience high levels of confusion, conflict, and disorientation. See Chapter 2, "Cross-Cultural Adaptation," for a full discussion of this process.

People's roles and attitudes towards leadership also change as a result of cross-cultural adaptation. In a local Cambodian community, for example, leadership traditionally held by elders and monks is now held by young people in formal positions of authority in the community organization. Raised in the United States, the younger generation has more formal education and more familiarity with mainstream language and culture than their elders. Consequently, they take on roles of decision making, advocacy, and representation of their community. This does not, however, mean that Cambodian youth have also won the necessary respect to make them accepted as leaders—see the scenarios on pages 91 and 94.

Leadership and Age in Transitional Culture X

Any particular individual will vary according to how quickly or completely he or she adjusts to cross-cultural adaptation. Often these differences are clearly related to age and generation: older newcomers have often spent most of their lives in their home country, and have strong beliefs and feelings based on their worldview about how things ought to be done. Younger newcomers may be more flexible in their thinking, but also more confused about what is right or good or just.
How might the age of the people below affect the way they perceive leadership? Can you tie this in with their degree of cross-cultural adaptation?

**Community Elders:**

Leaders should be patient, faithful, self-sacrificing, mature, skilled in mediation, and knowledgeable and experienced with the community and culture.

**Middle Generation:**

Leaders should be educated, confident, older, and humble; have problem-solving and fundraising skills, and practical experience.

**Youth:**

Leaders should be democratic, non-political, friendly, educated, and progressive; and serve without self-interest.

Now look back to the exercise you just did on leadership characteristics. Can you see ways that your own age affects your choices? What are the implications of working with people of other ages? Here is another exercise to help you and your group think about how culture affects the way people approach leadership:
**Cultural Conceptions of Leadership**

**Purpose:** To identify the ideas that different cultural groups have around what constitutes good leadership.

**Activity:** Read the following statements. How well do they fit your idea of a good leader? Check YES, NO, or SOMETIMES according to what you decide.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In our culture, a good leader...</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>SOMETIMES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tells the people what to do.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is genuinely interested in knowing what everyone wants.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>listens to everyone equally, young and old, rich and poor, men and women.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>listens only to certain people.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>listens to everyone, but has strong opinions of his/her own.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>helps the people decide what is best for them as a group.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>directs discussion during meetings.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>says only enough to help others along during meetings.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>has the last word in how community money is spent.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>doesn't have to know what the people think.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>owns the biggest business.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>decides who speaks, who is heard.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>often does things the people don't understand.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sometimes tells the people what to do; other times lets them decide.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>basically acts like a teacher.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Who Can Be a Leader?

Because of the changes caused by cross-cultural adaptation, newcomers are in a particularly creative and challenging situation with regards to maintaining or developing patterns of leadership. Their transitional status gives them a unique window of opportunity in which everyone may be able to assume new roles. Although youth and women may rarely have been leaders in the old country, new ways of living and new concepts of leadership can cast these groups into leadership roles. Elders who once had been community leaders may find themselves lacking the education and language skill necessary to advocate for their people. As a result, they may have to function more as counselors or advisors, and delegate activities to others better able to carry them out.

Think about who becomes leaders in your community, or your group's community. Are they men or women? Middle-aged or young adults? Local people or people from far away? What race are they? Could someone from humble origins be a leader, or do leaders always come from affluent powerful families?

Discuss with your group how leaders have changed since they have come to the new country:

- Are there some groups always represented as leaders?
- Are there some who never are represented? What do you attribute this to?
- Do these patterns reflect the group's traditional culture? Their culture in transition? American culture?
- What aspects of leadership might your group change to help them in their new environment?

Leadership and Power

Leadership is a sensitive issue because it involves power. Leaders often have huge control over access to resources, information, and decision-making. Some overly directive leaders may abuse this power to manipulate others in their own self-interest.

Problems in Seeking a More Democratic Leadership

Many refugees are fleeing autocratic regimes in hopes of finding a more equitable system of government. Consequently they are suspicious of directive leadership and receptive to learning more participatory methods. If their traditional culture is authoritarian, though, it may be difficult for them to embrace a more democratic leadership immediately. Education, patience, and time are necessary.
As discussed in the chapter on communication, how a community chooses its leaders has as much to do with tradition and expectations as with what is best for the community or the leadership merits of individual people. Without intervention, leaders usually are chosen from the dominant groups traditionally holding power. These are the groups most likely to be respected and listened to, who—unlike more subordinate ones—already have a mandate for power without having to prove themselves.

**Expanding Participation in Leadership**

Because of this, we can't ignore issues of discrimination that influence both the way members of the dominant culture listen to the people in our group, and the way people in our group listen to each other. Empowering the current community leaders with respect to the outside community is only half our task. We also need to consider how the ethnic community might benefit by having other members take on stronger leadership roles.

- How might the community benefit if women had stronger leadership roles? If younger members were more respected?
- How can subordinate members be encouraged to participate?
- How can traditional leaders be encouraged to relax control without losing face?
- How would these changes affect the integrity of cultural traditions?
- How could the traditional culture still be validated in the face of change?

These questions reflect our conviction that some aspect of democratic leadership is essential for the survival of newcomer communities in the United States. We do not mean by this that no formal positions of authority should exist, that all decisions should be made by consensus, or that a traditional hierarchy could not coexist within a democratic framework. We do hope, however, that even the most autocratic newcomer groups will learn to use participatory methods as a cultural tool to aid them in living in the United States. Some situations, and some cultures, require more directive, authoritative leadership than others. Each group needs to assess for itself what kinds of leadership it wants under what circumstances.
The Practitioner's Role

As practitioners, we can do several things to help the groups we work with understand and explore new kinds of leadership. Think about the following pointers. We can

- model a facilitative, participatory style;
- help the group to assess its traditional approaches to leadership and why these may or may not be appropriate in their current situation;
- educate them about the roles leaders can play, and the ways in which they might be accountable to the people they represent;
- understand (and share our understanding of) situational leadership;
- allow community members to make final decisions about how they choose to operate.

Finally, don’t forget to explore how your own culture influences your style as a leader and a practitioner!
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Assessment Tools

Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation Behavior™ (FIRO-B), Consulting Psychologists Press, Inc. 3803 E. Bayshore Rd., Palo Alto, CA 94303, (415) 969-8901

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI), Consulting Psychologists Press, Inc. 3803 E. Bayshore Rd., Palo Alto, CA 94303, (415) 969-8901

Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI), Xicom, Inc., Woods Road, Tuxedo, NY 10987, (914) 351-4735/(800) 759-4266

Strength Deployment Inventory (SDI), Personal Strengths Publishing, P.O. Box 397, Pacific Palisades, CA 90272-0397, (213) 454-5915/(800)624-7347
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Playing Their Game Our Way. *Strategies for lobbying, organizing referenda, tracking elected officials, and developing clout.*

We Interrupt This Program... *A manual for citizens and groups for using the media for social change.*

How to Make Citizen Involvement Work. *An action guide for effective citizen participation in government.*


Differences: A Bridge or a Wall. *Guide for individuals and groups to examine racial, cultural, and other differences, and to develop strategies for overcoming related problems.*

Breaking the Boardroom: *An Annotated Bibliography. Books, pamphlets, articles, etc., on developing board and council effectiveness.*

Networking. *Guide to group networking and collaboration, plus theory, case studies, bibliography, and conference planning.*

Beyond Schools. *Case studies and conceptual overview of forms of out-of-school education.*

Lifelong Learning Manual. *Guide for trainers working as educational staff development in human service agencies, self-help groups, religious institutions, etc.*

Lifelong Learning in the Community. *Annotated, referenced bibliography to accompany Beyond Schools*

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**Janet MacFadyen** is a freelance writer and researcher in education, cultural studies, science, and religion. In 1993, she received an M.F.A. in English from the University of Massachusetts, and has been a writer associated with CIRCLE since 1989. Her professional work has contributed to many area college publications and development efforts, teacher certification tests, and articles in national journals. In addition, her poetry has appeared in such publications as the *Atlantic Monthly, Poetry, Yankee,* and *The Christian Science Monitor.*
About . . The Center for International Education

The Center for International Education is an academic program in the School of Education at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Drawing on faculty, students, and outside resources, the Center offers graduate level, professional training and research opportunities in international development, community education, and international education. Its educational approach is based on the belief that the best professional training occurs when a person moves freely between periods of reflection, study, and field experiences. Much of the Center’s training, therefore, takes place in the design and implementation of projects both in the United States and abroad in which students take an active part.

Two projects under the umbrella of the Center for International Education are committed to grassroots collective leadership and community development: the Center for Immigrant and Refugee Community Leadership and Empowerment (CIRCLE), and its publishing arm, the Center for Organizational and Community Development (COCD).

About . . The Center for Immigrant and Refugee Community Leadership and Empowerment

The Center for Immigrant and Refugee Community Leadership and Empowerment (CIRCLE) is part of a statewide partnership project between newcomer communities, the University of Massachusetts, and the Massachusetts Office of Refugees and Immigrants. At Amherst, we work in partnership with refugees and immigrants to enhance the quality of life in newcomer communities. Using a model of collective leadership and public service learning, we bring together students, community groups and leaders, and university resources around activities that benefit the community as a whole.

About . . The Center for Organizational and Community Development

The Center for Organizational and Community Development (COCD) creates educational manuals for practitioners and community groups throughout the nation. COCD brings together research and action, theory and practice, in its mission to empower citizens, leaders, groups, and communities in their work for social change.