



Culturally Speaking

Cross-cultural and Multi-cultural Communications at Work

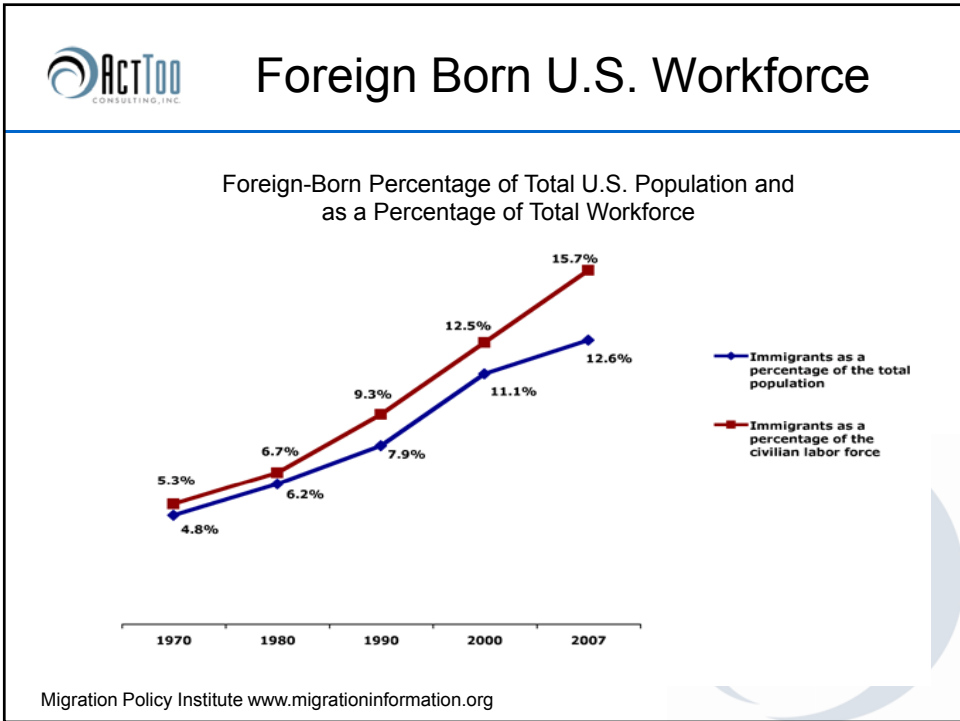
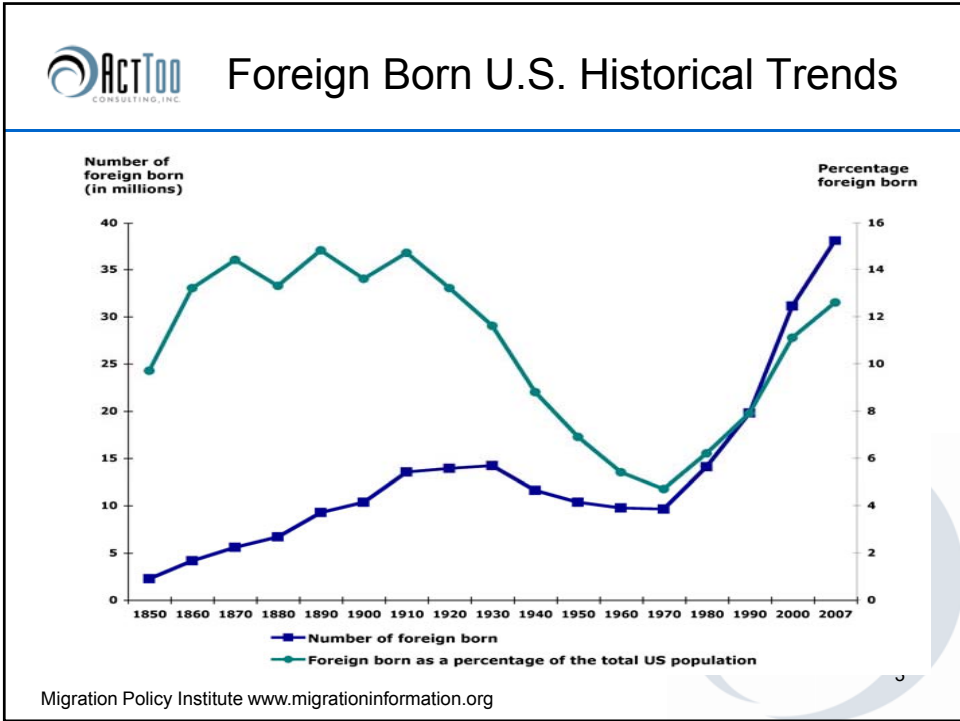
Joan Goppelt & Keith W. Ray
Act Too Consulting, Inc.



Culture and Diversity in Today's Organizations

- Immigration and globalization are changing the face of many organizations
- To engage all employees, organizations will need to:
 - Develop a learning perspective on cultural diversity
 - Expand cross-cultural communication skills
 - Increase cultural competency







Diversity Perspective

- Group members' normative beliefs and expectations about cultural diversity and its role in their work group.
- Three perspectives
 - Integration-and-Learning
 - Access-and-Legitimacy
 - Discrimination-and-Fairness
- Perspectives become evident
 - In the way people in the organization describe and experience cultural identity
 - Through what is embedded in the policies and practices

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Perspectives

- Perspectives influence work group processes and outcomes
- In the HPO DCM model, leadership philosophy is a perspective on the nature of work and the nature of people that influences processes and outcomes
- Likewise, perspectives on cultural diversity can influence work group processes and outcomes

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Emerging Theory

- Based upon research in three organizations
 - Law Firm
 - Financial Services Firm
 - Consulting Firm
- Robin Ely & David Thomas (2001). Cultural diversity at work: The effects of diversity perspectives on work group processes and outcomes. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 46, 229-273.
- Initial research focused on race because it was an aspect of diversity salient in all three organizations
- Ability to generalize to other aspects of cultural identity


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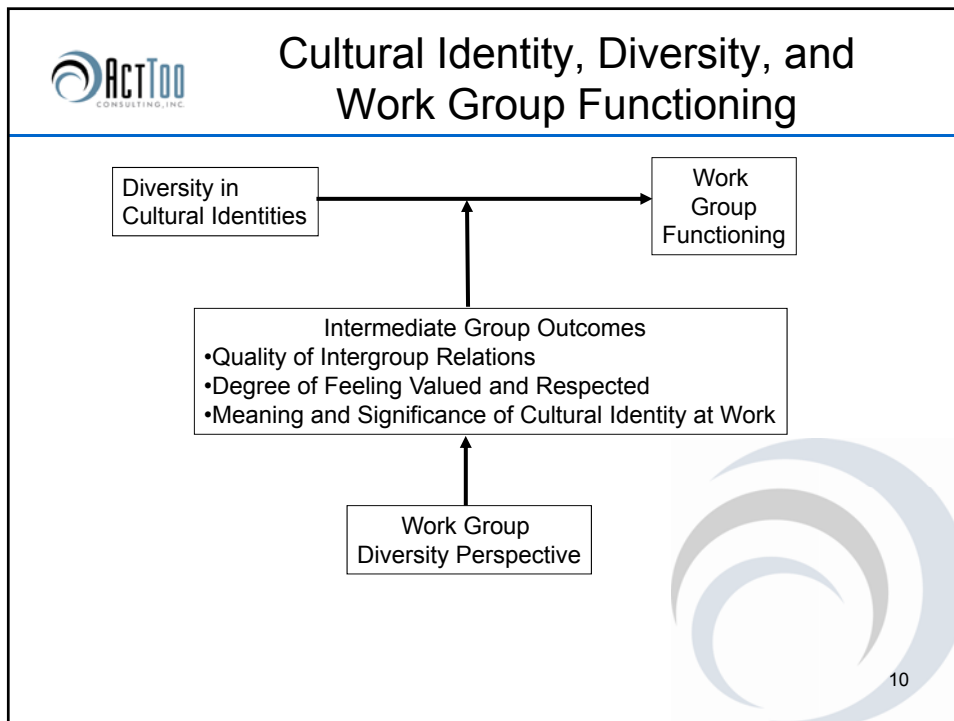



Cultural Identity

- Socially constructed
- Complex
- Dynamic
- Power differences both inside and outside of the organization


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 Summary of Work Group Diversity Perspectives			
Characteristics	Integration-and-learning	Access-and-legitimacy	Discrimination-and-fairness
Rationale for diversifying	To inform and enhance core work and work processes	To gain access to and legitimacy with diverse markets and clients	To ensure justice and equality and eliminate discrimination
Value of cultural identity	High; a resource for learning, change, and renewal; should integrate cultural differences into core work and work processes as appropriate	Moderate; a resource only at the interface between organization and markets/clients; should differentiate to gain access and legitimacy; otherwise, assimilate to dominant white culture	Low; it is a basis for unjust discrimination; should assimilate to dominate white culture
Connection between cultural diversity and work	Direct; incorporated throughout the work	Indirect; race-based division of labor to enhance access & legitimacy	Limited; norms against a connection
Indicators of progress	Increased representation of traditionally underrepresented groups that have power to change organization; process and product innovation; shared sense that cultural diversity is a resource for learning	Increased representation of traditionally underrepresented groups, especially in boundary or visible positions	Increased representation of traditionally underrepresented groups ⁹



 Intermediate Group Outcomes and Functioning			
Mediators	Integration-and-learning	Access-and-legitimacy	Discrimination-and-fairness
Quality of intergroup relations	Open discussion and productive conflict; equal power and status	Differential power and status; little open discussion and conflict	Undiscussible power and status; conflict avoided
Feeling valued and respected	All feel respected and valued for competence and contribution	Employees of color question if they are valued and respected; less valued functions staffed by people of color	Employees of color feel disrespected and devalued
Significance of own racial identity at work	People of Color: a value and resource of learning Whites: privilege to acknowledge	People of Color: ambivalence Whites: not conscious	People of Color: powerlessness Whites: apprehension
Group Functioning			
	Enhanced: exploration and learning of diverse views	Enhanced: increased access and legitimacy Inhibited: lack of learning and exchange	Inhibited: low morale; lack of cross-cultural learning; inability to use all skills and insights

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 Implications	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity perspective provides the frame within which group members interpret and act upon their cultural identity differences • Impacts groups' capacity for learning, adaptive change, and managing conflict • Impacts what is visible and discussible in the organization • Provides explanation for why diversity initiatives have mixed results 	

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Developing an Integration and Learning Perspective

- Test your assumptions about culture and diversity
- Learn how to learn about culture and diversity
- Make culture and diversity part of work processes



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Sophisticated Stereotyping → Culture-in-Context

Hofstede's Dimensions of Culture

Distributed Power ——— Central Power
 Accept Uncertainty ——— Avoid Uncertainty
 Collectivism ——— Individualism
 Femininity ——— Masculinity




- Cultural paradoxes occur because:
 - Confusing individual with group values
 - Treating these as either-or continua
 - Role differences
 - Real versus espoused values
 - Value trumping in specific contexts

- To understand the logic of another culture one must:
 - Understand the natural diversity among individuals
 - View cultural dimensions as tendencies not absolutes
 - Examine intersection of roles
 - Understand when certain cultural values are more important than others in context

To explain the complex, one must not merely simplify, but rather substitute a more intelligible complexity for one that is less intelligible.

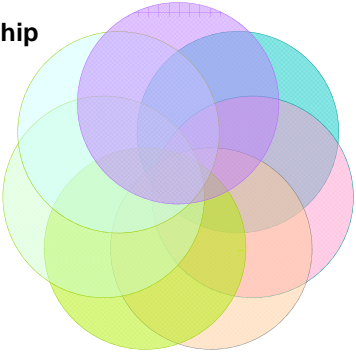
Osland, J. S., et al (2000)

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Culture (un)Defined

Structure / Patterns



Group Membership

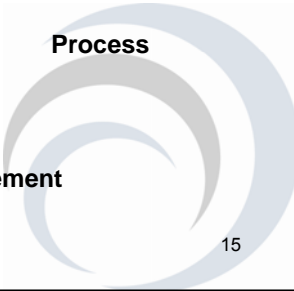
Functions

Power / Ideology


Process

Products

Refinement



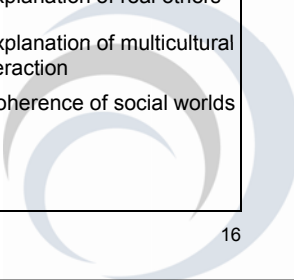
Baldwin, J. R., et al (2006) 15




Culturally Speaking

- Work-related dyads were observed discussing ambiguous or confusing cross-cultural videos and conversations.
- Identified the stories and communication patterns created through cultural referencing.
- These patterns were then analyzed for what they were doing.

<u>Stories Told</u>	<u>Manner of Storytelling</u>	<u>Making</u>
▪Stories of culture	▪Co-constructing	▪Explanation of the scene
▪Stories of the scene	▪Testing or hedging	▪Explanation of real others
▪Stories of real others	▪Self-reflexive	▪Explanation of multicultural interaction
▪Stories of multicultural interaction	▪Co-reflexive	▪Coherence of social worlds
▪Stories of self	▪Moving toward or away from culture	




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 **Ethnocentric → Ethnorelative**

Denial → Defense → Minimization → Acceptance → Adaptation → Integration

Ethnocentrism	Ethnorelativism
<u>Denial</u> – disinterest in cultural difference	<u>Acceptance</u> – one’s own culture is a number of equally complex worldviews
<u>Defense</u> – own culture is the only viable one	<u>Adaptation</u> – experience of another culture yields perception and behavior appropriate to that culture
<u>Defense (reversal)</u> – adopted culture is viewed as superior	<u>Integration</u> – one’s experience of self includes movement in and out of different cultural worldviews
<u>Minimization</u> – elements of one’s own cultural world view is experienced as universal	

Bennett (2004) 17

 **What can be done?**

- As a leader and/or change agent, understand your own perspective and biases about culture and diversity
- Learn what diversity perspectives you have at play in your organization; start with policies and strategies
- Understand culture and diversity perspective of others in your organization
- Develop strategies, policies, training, and learning opportunities to develop intercultural competency
- Make intercultural competency and diversity part of the work of the organization; integrate into the work processes.

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