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# POINT OF VIEW<sup>1</sup>

## MANAGING TORTILLAS, PITAS, MATZO, AND MANO WHEN YOU GREW UP ON WHITE BREAD

Steven Sligar<sup>2</sup>

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Author's Note: Special thanks to Dan Langholtz, ADARA Conference Chairperson, who in his opening comments of the conference, cited the title of my presentation as exemplary of the spirit of the theme "Cultural Pluralism? Empowerment Through Manual Understanding," May 1993, San Diego, CA.

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We all eat. Food varies from person to person and culture to culture. A nutritionist would say food has five different dimensions: taste, texture, color, aroma, and presentation. Just as we can learn to appreciate foods that are different, so can we learn to appreciate the culture which produces the food. This is stating the obvious but sometimes this is the first experience when attempting to celebrate diversity. However, when dealing with the persons who prepared the food, particularly in a work setting, there are other factors to consider.

This paper will review two models and apply them to valuing diversity by working with or supervising people, some of whom may be deaf or hard-of-hearing.

### Givens

In the discussion of the two theoretical constructs, it is important to accept the following assumptions: First, diverse groups are here. A very cursory review of the 1990

<sup>1</sup>This section provides a forum for exchange of reasoned ideas on all sides of issues in the area of deafness. The opinions expressed in this article, and others that appear in *Point of View*, are those of the authors and should not be considered the position of *JADARA* or the editors of *JADARA*. The editors welcome responses to the opinions expressed in this section.

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census yields enough statistical data for any article on diversity or the future to prove that various cultural groups are present. This issue is accepted and not discussed.

The second given is that people who are deaf have cultural characteristics which distinguish them as a unique group. The most obvious example of this is American Sign Language.

Finally, this is not an empirical article. This is one based on personal experience and use of the conceptual models for a framework. The five stages of the Minority Identification Model are defined. Then the three parts of the Organizational Strategies for Managing Cross Cultural Diversity are outlined. Finally, practical applications of these two models are discussed.

### **Minority Identification Development Model**

The MID was originally developed for counseling members of minority groups (Atkinson, Morten & Sue, 1979). The five stages of the model are described briefly with anecdotal information to illustrate group development along these lines.

Stage 1 is the conformity stage. Individuals will identify more strongly with dominant cultural values, demonstrate a lack of awareness of an ethnic perspective, may exhibit negative attitudes toward self and others as a part of an ethnic group and accept and believe stereotypes prevalent in society about themselves and their group. An individual in this stage may make statements such as "I'm deaf," "I can't hear," "Maybe this hearing aid will help me to...," "SSI is okay—it's hard for us to find work...," "I don't fit. No friends."

Stage 2 is the dissonance stage. Individuals will experience confusion and conflict about the values and beliefs developed in stage 1 and actively question dominant cultural values. There will be an awareness of issues involving racism, sexism, oppression, etc. Identity with the history of the personal cultural group may develop. Feelings of anger and loss may arise as he or she may seek role models from the cultural group to which one belongs. This stage can be characterized by 'why' statements such as "why do I have to go to speech school?" "Deaf people are good teachers, why aren't they the boss?" "Do deaf people go to college?" "Have there been any deaf lawyers, teachers, etc." Other behaviors exhibited may include some attendance at a consumer group such as the State Chapter of

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the National Association of the Deaf, Self-Help for Hard of Hearing persons or another group.

Stage 3 is the resistance and immersion stage. Individuals will actively and forcefully reject and distrust the dominant culture. They will develop a greater identification with their own culture. There will be an immersion into ethnic study, history, traditions, food, language, etc. There may be some historical or cultural questions such as "where is deaf Smith County?" "Did you know - I. King Jordan is the "first Deaf President of Gallaudet." Most likely there will be some type of activist behavior with motivation towards combating oppression, racism, sexism, and separatism. Examples of behaviors exhibited by persons in this stage would include statements such as "hearing can't teach, counsel, etc. only Deaf can." "Only hire Deaf in Deaf programs." The person may become selflessly involved in deaf group activities. T-shirts, hats, slogans, pins, etc. are often worn with messages promoting Deaf over hearing or other groups. There will be extreme resistance to adapted sign language which can cause frustration and lack of communication with hearing persons who have not learned to communicate fully in American Sign Language.

Stage 4 is the introspection stage when the individual will begin to question the rigid rejection of dominant culture values. There will be conflict or confusion regarding loyalty to the individual's culture group and personal autonomy. The struggle for self-awareness will continue. Some of the behaviors and statements of this stage would be a response to a request to attend yet another Friday night deaf activity of "I want to go but..." "Yes, but..." "Maybe this (other cultural group) can help to ..." The individual may begin to join other groups or develop interests in other areas. This could be either personal, such as a hobby, or disability related, such as a coalition task force or other group involved with broader issues than those only dealing with persons who are deaf.

Stage 5 is the synergetic articulation and awareness stage. At this time there will be resolution of conflicts exemplified in stage 4 and a sense of fulfillment regarding personal cultural identity. There will be an increased appreciation of other cultural groups as well as dominant cultural values. The individual will selectively accept or reject dominant cultural values based upon prior experience and there will be a motivation to eliminate all forms of oppression. Some example statements or behaviors would include "I'm Deaf"; "your child has a cochlear implant" or "you are a member of the Self Help for Hard of Hearing person and that's fine"; "we need to work together to have improved educational opportunities for deaf children." "I went to the State School for the Deaf and I'm proud

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of that." They may want to work with vocational rehabilitation, interpreters, or other groups to accomplish a common goal.

To summarize, the individual goes through a metamorphosis from no self identity to awareness/confusion to an immersion to self analysis and finally to acceptance/awareness. This albeit brief discussion of the minority identity development model has direct application for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing. It should be noted this is not intended to be used as a diagnostic tool or a model for intervention. It is to be used to understand the growth of individuals within the context of their development. These individuals do work in organizations. Next, the following discussion of organizations will be overlaid with this model.

The Organizational Strategy for Managing Cross Cultural Diversity was based on a study conducted in Canada (Sadler, 1983). Findings indicated there are three types of organizations. Each has its own perception and strategy for managing the impact of cultural diversity. Descriptions and discussion of these follow.

The Parochial Organization motto can be summed up as "our way is the only way." An example of this type of organization could be the traditional residential school for the deaf. A parochial organization experiencing problems would not acknowledge the impact of diversity but could attribute these problems to other factors. These could be stated as 1) "It's really a language problem; those deaf people do communicate differently through that sign language." 2) "It's really not a problem; after all we are all people" which is an assumed similarity. 3) "There is no problem." 4) "We are doing everything that the law says we are doing"; (we are in legal compliance). 5) "It's really a woman's issue" or the problem is attributed to social class or gender.

The Ethnocentric Organization Motto can be summed up as "our way is the best way." This organization will play lip service to the cultural diversity but attempts will be made to foster conformity and a unicultural work force. The classic example is a program of services for persons who are deaf with no deaf person present within the organization.

The Synergistic Organization Motto may be "the compilation of our and their way may be the best way." Problems will occur and have to be addressed. There are definitely advantages. These include flexibility and openness to new ideas. As members of the Deaf culture are present throughout the organization, they will be able to represent the needs of customers and bring a different perspective to problem solving. There will also be a

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heightened awareness of organizational dynamics and communication patterns, i.e. "we really do need an interpreter at the staff meeting."

The above has discussed briefly three types of organizations and the impact of managing cultural diversity on the organization. Table 1 summarizes the three original types in their perception and response to diversity.

Now it's necessary to tie these two models together and find a practical application for them. First, it is important to determine your own stage of development in relation to your own ethnic group. Secondly, you need to understand the stage of development of the individual with whom you are interacting in your organization. This can be done by looking at the behaviors and statements of the individual and applying them to the descriptors of the stages of development. Finally, the organizational climate in which the two of you are functioning needs to be determined. This can be done from a demographic

**TABLE 1**

### Perceiving and Managing the Impact of Cultural Diversity

Type of Organization	Perception	Strategy	Most Likely Outcomes	Frequency
Parochial	No Impact	Ignore Difference	Problems	Very Common
Ethnocentric	Negative Impact	Minimize Difference	Some Problems and Few Advantages	Common
Synergistic	Potential, Negative and Positive Impacts	Manage Differences	Some Problems and Many Advantages	Very Uncommon

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counting perspective, an analysis of the formal and informal mechanism for input, a statement of recognition of differences, and a celebration of same through the development (training, mentoring), exposure, interaction (both formal and informal), and group problem solving process(es).

The perfect situation would be for both you and the individual to be at stage 5 of development while working in a synergistic organization. However, the harsh reality is that you and the individual are on different stages of development and functioning within either a parochial or ethnocentric organization. After you have become aware of these facts, then you can apply these to the management function which you are providing. Time, space, and lack of information about you and the individual prohibit further discussion in this area. However, it is possible to look at the various functions of management in relation to the three types of organizations. These management functions include recruitment, advancement, development, recognition, discipline, and integration are discussed further.

### **Discussion**

In looking at the three organizations in terms of the impact of deafness as a cultural variable, both the parochial and ethnocentric organization would hire hearing persons or those persons who are audiologically outside of the "normal" range but who function very well within the hearing culture. The synergistic organization would have a commitment to finding persons from the Deaf culture. Regarding advancement both the parochial and ethnocentric organizations would have opportunities for a conformist and a synergetic organization would seek those that have the ability to do the job. In the area of development, the parochial organization would encourage the deaf person to accept the dominant culture values and seek to develop a transformation, i.e., become like us. This would most likely not be emphasized in an ethnocentric organization as opposed to a very heavy developmental emphasis in a synergistic one. The area of employee recognition would follow along the lines of the stated mottos of doing it the company way (parochial), complimenting our way (ethnocentric), or the one which would point out advantages of both the Deaf and hearing cultures (synergistic).

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Regarding discipline, those deviating from the hearing culture norm would receive management attention in a parochial organization and a non-conformist in ethnocentric. The issue of discipline would be related to the issue of actual job performance in a synergistic organization. Finally, regarding integration of the two cultures this would be nonexistent in a parochial with tokenism occurring in ethnocentric and true acceptance in a synergistic.

Clearly the perception of management of the impact of cultural diversity can determine the success or failure of the organization and its ability to deal with the diverse workforce.

### Summary

The Minority Identification Model can be applied to the culture of persons who are Deaf and persons who are Hard of Hearing. Information garnered from applications of the descriptors can then be used to determine both the manager and employees stage of development. When overlaid with one of the three types of organizations then the manager is able to make a determination as to individuals and organizations level of functioning. It is through this initial awareness that the process of understanding, appreciating, and "valuing" diversity can begin.

### Recommendations

As noted by Solomon (1993) there are various ways to improve your understanding of a culture. Adapting these to Deaf people, some are:

1. Go there. Live and experience many cultural events from bowling night to a NAD conference.
2. Have a cognizant experience. There is a wealth of reading materials about the history, language, and people which have become more readily available and accessible over the last few years.
3. If possible, experience the culture with a family or member of the community who is willing to take time and share of their home and personal experiences with you.



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4. Organizationally, use a specialist in cross cultural communication (not an interpreter). This would be an individual who is familiar with the language, customs, practices, and beliefs of persons who are Deaf and could assist a hearing person to understand the full impact of communication which is occurring.
5. Hire, develop, promote, and recognize persons who are Deaf and persons who are Hard of Hearing.
6. Finally, use the experience of other hearing people who have been in the Deaf culture and can relate these experiences to you.

The above are a few suggestions and when combined with an understanding of yourself, the other person, and the organization in which we are functioning, there will be a very positive impact of valuing diversity.

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