

**Overview:**

This lesson plan will challenge participants to adapt their behavior in response to other cultural behaviors. They will be assigned to teams, and each team will be provided with a description of cultural behaviors that they should enact during the activity. These behaviors will often be contradictory to other teams' behaviors, so participants will have to negotiate these differences and choose when to adapt.

**Background and Information:**

This activity was adapted by Purdue CILMAR staff from an exercise created by Cathy Polanski.

**Objectives:**

As a result of this activity, participants will be able to:

1. Experience differences in fictional cultures.
2. Negotiate how to adapt your behavior to accommodate a different cultural behavior.

**Time:**

1 hour

**Group Size:**

Small Group

**Materials:**

Different pieces of colored paper with cultural values profiles (distribute to the group in even numbers)

**Intercultural Development Continuum Stages:**

- Denial
- Polarization
- Minimization

**AAC&U Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Goals:**

Verbal and Nonverbal Communication:

- To articulate a complex understanding of cultural differences in verbal and nonverbal communication (e.g., demonstrates understanding of the degree to which people use physical contact while communicating in different cultures or use direct/indirect and explicit/implicit meanings).
- To skillfully negotiate a shared understanding based on these differences.

Empathy

- To interpret intercultural experience from the perspectives of own and more than one worldview.
- To demonstrate ability to act in a supportive manner that recognizes the feelings of another cultural group

## Curiosity:

- To ask complex questions about other cultures.
- To seek out and articulate answers to these questions that reflect multiple cultural perspectives.

## Knowledge of Cultural Worldview Frameworks:

- To demonstrate sophisticated understanding of the complexity of elements important to members of another culture in relation to its history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs & practices.

## Other Skills:

### Mentorship & Leadership

### Activity instructions:

1. Before the event, make multiple copies of each of the following designated colors of paper and cut to size.
2. At the time of the event, distribute the colored slips as evenly as possible among the participants with each participant having only one slip.
3. Ask the participants to meet with those with the same color of paper and decide how they will go about acting out what is on their slip of paper.
4. When the facilitator gives the signal to begin, the participants should mingle with those who have another color slip of paper and ask each person three questions: "What is your favorite color, movie, and food?"
5. When they have answered all three questions, each participant will move on to a new partner and ask the three questions again. This continues for 15 minutes.
6. When the signal is given, the groups return to their seats, with all the "blues" sitting together, all the "greens" together, etc.

## The Teams:

**Blue Team:** You must offer food (crackers, small cookies, etc.) to each person before you can talk to them about other things. Make sure you have offered many times if they first say "no." You must move on to someone else if people will not eat your food. It is offensive for people not to eat your food before talking with you. However, it is also offensive for people to take too much of your food. Your culture has often not had enough food, so you display care and concern for people by offering food; however, they must show respect by not taking too much.

**Green Team:** You must never eat in public, or accept food from others in public. It is very impolite. You must never say the word "no." Find other ways of responding. Change the subject rather than just saying "no" to someone. Be careful not to stand too close to people. You must respect people's personal space. Try not to touch people as they may think you are trying to hurt them. Stand very straight and tall and look very proper at all times so no one will suspect you of trying to hurt them in any way.

**Pink Team:** It is important to show that you really care about each person by shaking their hands or giving them a hug before you speak. You must stand as close as possible when you talk or they will think you have something to hide. Standing close is important for building trust. When speaking with others it is very important not to be more than a few inches from them.

**Tan Team:** You must not look anyone directly in the eye. It is disrespectful to do so. Make sure you always look to the side or down. People may think you are trying to confront them or start a fight if you look directly into their eyes. Many of your people have died in long wars. It is very important to you to keep the peace by showing respect and looking away when talking with others.

**Yellow Team:** You must count to ten in your head before you respond to anyone. It is not polite to answer right away. Do not let others know you are counting. Make it look like you are politely waiting to answer them.

Debriefing:

- Who can tell me what you experienced with the blue group (the blue group cannot answer)?
- Blue group, did they “read” your behavior correctly?
- Who can tell me what you experienced with the group (continue this line of questioning with each group)?
- Which two cultures had the toughest time communicating with one another?
- What could the two cultures have done to make the interchange easier?
- Have you ever experienced anything similar in real life?
- The debrief can go in many directions from here...

### Related Tools:

*Similar tools:*

- [The Cocktail Party](#)
- [Mingle](#)
- [The Mockingbird](#)
- [The Owl](#)
- [Simulation: Rockets and Sparklers](#)
- [Toothpicks](#)
- [What is the Message?](#)