



# 2017 SRA International Annual Meeting October 14-18, 2017

## Challenges and Strategies for Intercultural Communication and Dynamics

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# Your Presenter: Marjorie Piechowski

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- SRA Distinguished Faculty
- SRA International Past President
- Over 30 years experience at three Midwest universities in
  - proposal development
  - faculty workshops and mentoring in grantsmanship, especially for new faculty
  - pre-award services
  - compliance
  - post-award oversight
- now, independent grant consultant for colleges and universities across the U.S. and globally



# Learning Objectives

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- Increase awareness of changing demographics that affect the academic research community
- Learn the multiple characteristics that define culture
- Recognize barriers to effective intercultural communication in research administration
- Consider implications of intercultural communication on research administration policy, practices and people
- Learn strategies for successful intercultural communication in research administration



# Why do we care about our differences in the context of Research Administration?

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- Research Administration Workplace Dynamics
  - RA roles defined in many ways
  - RA crosses many service lines, internal and external
  - RA functions in hierarchical settings
  - RA uses both formal and informal communication, including legal and contractual issues
  - RA is a dynamic, changing profession
  - RA profession is influenced by people, politics, time and place



# How do many aspects of culture influence research administration?

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- Generation/Age
- Cultural and social norms/customs
- Ethnicity/Nationality
- Language
- Gender/sexual orientation
- Academic field/professional background
- Level of education
- Physical characteristics



# Why do we care about our differences in the context of Research Administration?

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- Policy and Procedure Implications
- ***Demographics/culture can influence attitudes and practices in:***
  - Use of human and animal subjects
  - Participation of minorities/children/indigenous populations in research and clinical trials
  - Intellectual property/ownership/publishing
  - Research integrity/ethics
  - Financial management of grants
  - Export control issues
  - Training of graduate students and post-doctoral associates
  - Negotiating agreements with other institutions, countries, political and geographical entities

# Why do we care about our differences in the context of Research Administration?

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- Human Interactions in Research Administration
  - Staff
  - Supervisors
  - Institutional leadership
  - Investigators
  - Other internal offices—professional colleagues
  - External relationships
    - Collaborating institutions
    - Funding agencies
    - Professional organizations



# World Demographics

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- If the world were 100 people:
  - 50 would be female, 50 male
  - 25 would be children
  - 75 would be adults, 9 of whom would be 65 and older
  - There would be
    - 60 Asians, 16 Africans, 14 people from the Americas, 10 Europeans
    - 31 Christians, 23 Muslims, 15 Hindus, 7 Buddhists, 8 who practice other religions, 16 people unaligned with a religion





# World Demographics, continued

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- There would be
  - 12 who speak Chinese
  - 6 who speak Spanish
  - 5 who speak English
  - 4 who speak Hindi
  - 3 who speak Arabic
  - 3 who speak Bengali
  - 3 who speak Portuguese
  - 2 who speak Russian
  - 2 who speak Japanese
  - 60 who speak other languages



# World Demographics, continued

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- 86 would be able to read and write
- 7 would have a college degree
- 40 would have an internet connection
- 78 people would have a place of shelter from wind and rain but
- 22 would not
- 1 would be dying of starvation
- 11 would be undernourished
- 22 would be overweight
- 91 would have access to safe drinking water but
- 9 would have no clean, safe water to drink

Data source: Fritz Erickson and John A. Vonk, 2016, 100 People: A World Portrait: A Global Education Toolbox



# Relevant Demographics: STEM

Data Sources: Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac 2017; NSF Science Indicators 2017

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- New STEM Ph.D.s from U.S. universities
  - U.S. citizens = 25%
  - Non-U.S. citizens = 75%
  - Males = 60-90%, depending on field
  - 66% of foreign-born U.S. S&E doctorate recipients remain in the U.S. five years after receiving their degrees
- Current U.S. faculty members
  - 73% white, 24% minority, 3% nonresident foreign
  - % of FT faculty with tenure: 53% male, 35% female
- U.S. research administration professionals:
  - U.S. citizens ~ 90%
  - Females ~ 75%
  - Monolingual ~ 75%?



# Relevant Demographics: Age

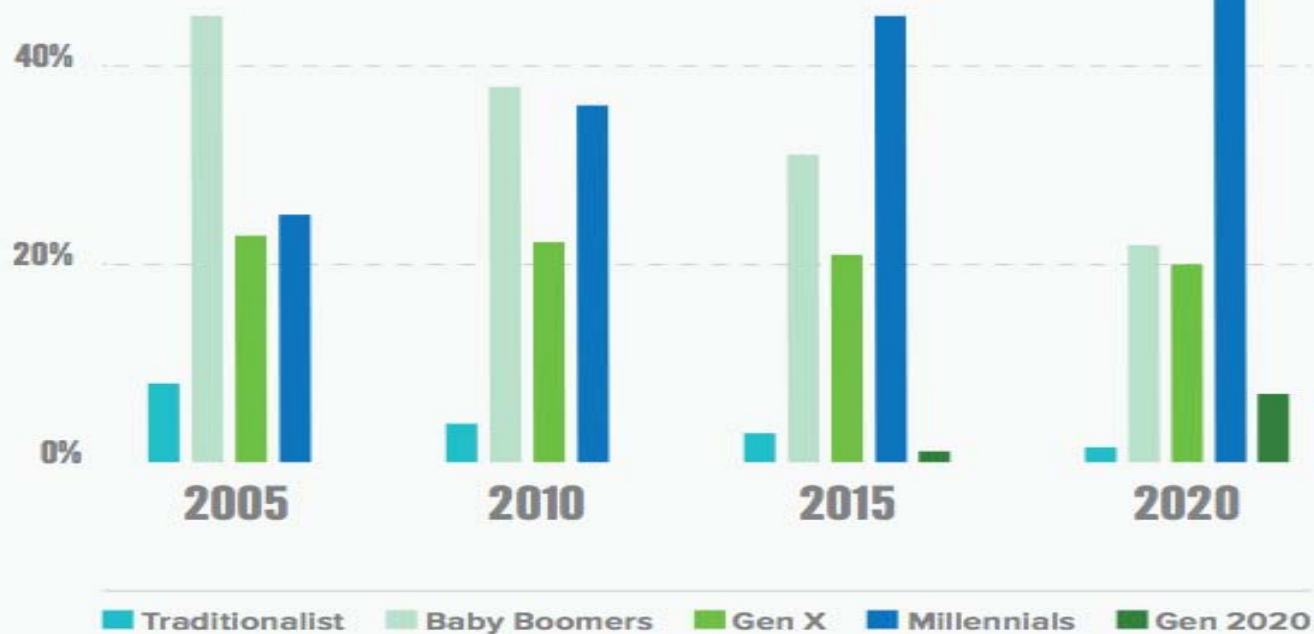
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- Current U.S. population
  - Four recognized “generational groups” active in the U.S. workforce, born in these eras:
    - Veterans (1925-1945)
    - Baby Boomers (1946-1964)
    - Generation X (1965-1980)
    - Generation Y (1981-2000), also called Millennials
- Other countries? Similar demographics or not?



# Generations in the U.S. Workforce

## Rise of Millennials in the Workforce



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics Employment Projections, 2012



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# Current Workforce Composite:

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics December 2015

<u>Generation</u>	<u>% Working</u>	<u>Age</u>
Veterans 1925-1945	10%	72-92
Baby Boomers 1946-1964	64%	50-68
Generation X 1965-1980	81%	34-49
Generation Y Millennials 1981-2000	81%	24-36



# Strategies for Multi-Generational Workplaces

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- Provide manager and staff training
- Encourage team-building across generations
- Establish knowledge transfer programs between experienced and new staff
- Encourage collaborative decision-making
- Recognize efforts of all employees
- Create succession plans and professional development
- Offer flexible benefits and work situations to accommodate life situations



# What Makes Up Culture?

Source: [Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America](#), by David Hackett Fischer

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- **Speech ways:** conventional patterns of written and spoken language - pronunciation, vocabulary, syntax and grammar.
- **Building ways:** prevailing forms of vernacular architecture and high architecture, which tend to be related to one another.
- **Family ways:** the structure and function of the household and family, both ideal and actual.
- **Marriage ways:** ideas of the marriage-bond, and cultural processes of courtship, marriage and divorce.





# Cultural components, continued

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- **Gender ways:** customs that regulate social relations between men and women.
- **Sex ways:** conventional sexual attitudes and acts, and the treatment of sexual deviance.
- **Child-rearing ways:** ideas of child nature and customs of child nurture.
- **Naming ways:** customs including favored forenames and the descent of names within the family.



# Cultural components, continued

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- **Age ways:** attitudes toward age, experiences of aging, and age relationships.
- **Death ways:** attitudes toward death, mortality rituals, mortuary customs, mourning practices.
- **Religious ways:** patterns of religious worship, theology, ecclesiology, and church architecture.
- **Magic ways:** normative beliefs and practices concerning the supernatural.
- **Learning ways:** attitudes toward literacy and learning, and conventional patterns of education.



# Cultural components, continued

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- **Dress ways:** customs of dress, demeanor, and personal adornment.
- **Sport ways:** attitudes toward recreation and leisure; folk games and forms of organized sport.
- **Work ways:** work ethics and work experiences; attitudes toward work and the nature of work.
- **Time ways:** attitudes toward the use of time, customary methods of time keeping, and the conventional rhythms of life.



# Cultural components, continued

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- **Wealth ways:** attitudes toward wealth and patterns of its distribution.
- **Rank ways:** the rules by which rank is assigned, the roles that rank entails, and relations between different ranks.
- **Social ways:** conventional patterns of migration, settlement, association and affiliation.



# Cultural components, continued

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- **Order ways:** ideas of order, ordering institutions, forms of disorder, and treatment of the disorderly.
- **Power ways:** attitudes toward authority and power; patterns of political participation.
- **Freedom ways:** prevailing ideas of liberty/restraint, and libertarian customs and institutions.



# Practically, what is culture?

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- The inherited beliefs, customs, arts, values, of a particular society, group, place, or time that constitute the shared bases of action and that are transmitted and reinforced by members of that group
- A way of thinking, behaving, or working that exists in a place or organization (such as a business)
- The set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution or organization
- Unwritten codes of behavior that individuals have internalized
- Culture affects the way we interpret and judge events, respond to new situations, and make decisions



Source: Merriam-Webster.com, 2017

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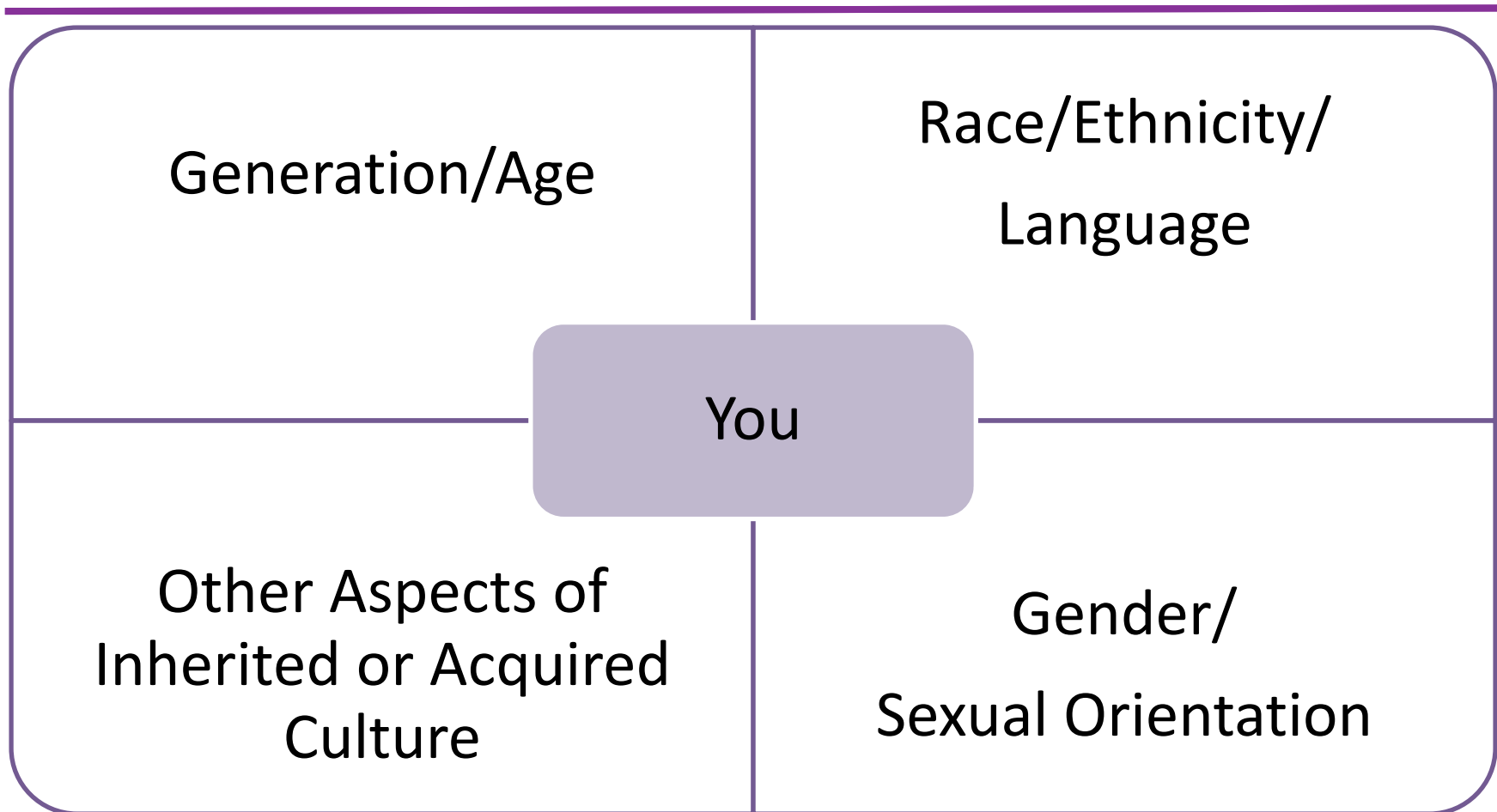
# What makes up your culture?

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- We don't choose our culture
- We learn and absorb our culture from earliest childhood
- Culture permeates both our conscious and unconscious thoughts, feelings and perceptions
- We express our culture through dress, manners, food, written and spoken words, gestures and movements, and silences



# Our Cultural Being, Visible and Invisible





# Group Discussion: culture and research administration: how do they interact?

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- The next two slides describe dimensions of culture that have direct impact on research administration
- See if you can think of examples to share in small group discussion
- I'll keep the two relevant slides available as needed for the discussion



# Nine Dimensions of Culture

Schell and Stolz-Loike, *Journal of International Compensation and Benefits*, Jan-Feb 1994

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- Communication: the way the society communicates, including gestures and words
- Diversity receptivity: how roles, power, and authority are associated with gender, race, religion, and country of origin
- Time: importance of personal relationships versus adhering to schedules
- Relationships: importance of building relationships versus completing a job
- Hierarchy: perception of rank in relationship to others and ways of interacting



# Nine Dimensions, continued

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- Status attainment: importance of personal achievement and sense of well-being
- Space/proxemics: the amount of space needed for comfort in business and personal environments
- Group dependence: importance of the individual versus the group in social and business situations
- Change tolerance: responses to change, the need for rules, the ability to take risks, and the perception of control over one's own destiny



# Generations and Culture

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- Many aspects of culture also are reflected in the different generations in the workplace:
  - Communication patterns and methods
  - Hierarchy/Status
  - Time
  - Relationships
  - Group dependence
  - Tolerance of change



# Practical Ways in Which Culture Relates to Research Administration

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- Interpretation of legal, statutory, and compliance issues
- Work styles, methods, and ethics
- Decision-making processes
- Levels of technology acceptance
- Openness towards new ideas and change
- Meeting etiquette



# Stumbling Blocks to Effective Intercultural Communication

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- Assuming similarity instead of difference
- Language
  - Vocabulary, grammar, idioms, slang, puns and word play, implications and inferences, irony, sarcasm
- Non-verbal misinterpretations
- Preconceptions and stereotypes
- Tendency to judge or evaluate
- High anxiety in new situations or with new people



# Intercultural Communication (IC)

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- IC looks at how people from differing cultural backgrounds try to communicate.
- IC looks at how people communicate (verbally and non-verbally), manage, work together, approach deadlines, negotiate, meet, greet, build relationships and much more.
- People with IC skills tend to demonstrate certain key competencies and characteristics:
  - open-mindedness, inquisitiveness, patience, and self-awareness.



# IC in Conducting Meetings

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- Meeting style varies significantly across cultures, including timing, duration, agenda, breaks, etiquette, facilitation, notes, etc.
- In France, meetings rarely include scheduled breaks (except lunch). People get up and leave whenever they need to take a break.
- In Latin cultures, meetings typically start 15-30 minutes after the stated time, leading to such colloquialisms as “hora brasileira” or “hora mexicana.”
- In Germany, meetings start on time, follow a defined agenda, and are followed up by printed minutes from the meeting.





# IC in Meetings, continued...

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- Meeting purpose and decision-making strategies also vary across cultures.
- For example, in France, decisions are generally made in the hallway after the meeting has been concluded.
- Use of “small talk” and asking personal or family-related questions varies tremendously across culture (e.g., high in Arab cultures and in some American local cultures, such as the South, low in German and Japanese cultures)

Source: Candia Elliott, Diversity Training Associates, R. Jerry Adams, Ph.D., Evaluation and Development Institute, Suganya Sockalingam, Ph.D., Office of Multicultural Health, Department of Human Resources, Oregon September 31, 1999. (Study funded in part by U.S. Office of Minority Affairs)



# Style and Culture in Meetings

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## American

- Direct
- Drive to be explicit:
  - Give/get the facts
  - State a clear position and rationale
  - Decide on the merits or rely on position of authority
- Giving and taking negative feedback is a sign of strength
- Confront when necessary with logic and persuasion skills

## Japanese

- Indirect
- Drive to reach consensus:
- Explore interest of all parties
- Reserve stating a firm position
- Achieve consensus
- Protect the dignity and self esteem of yourself and others—save face
- Avoid confrontation
- Strive to develop harmonious, trusting business relationships



# Non-verbal Communication (Paralinguistics)

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- The nonverbal elements in speech, such as body language, intonation, etc., that send messages about feelings and emotional states
- Makes up more than 70% of the communication process
- May affect the meaning of an utterance
- Many non-verbal elements are out of our conscious control (blushing, pupil dilation, perspiring, yawning)



# Non-verbal communication, continued...

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- Some non-verbal communication is universal; most is dependent on culture and context
- People tend to believe the non-verbal over the verbal if there is a discrepancy
- Some studies say that women are better at reading non-verbal cues than men (75%, according to Hall 1978, Rosenthal, 1979)



# Non-Verbal Example

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Western cultures: 'Do you have a telephone?'  
USA: sign for the Texas long horns  
Some countries: 'Cuckold!' (your wife is cheating on you)

Source: Laurence Wylie. 1977. *Beaux Gestes*



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# Types of Non-verbal Communication

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- Proxemics: the study of spatial relationships in humans
- Kinesics: the study of the role of body movements in communication:
  - Gestures (winking, shrugging, fidgeting, pointing, nodding, doodling, etc.)
  - Facial expressions
  - Posture
  - Eye contact



# More types of non-verbal communication

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- Silence
  - Affects timing and turn-taking in decisions and discussions
- Clothing/hairstyles/cosmetics/artifacts
  - Influences perceptions of the speaker, such as status, personal/political/religious leanings, sexual orientation
- Touching
  - Varies within cultures according to a number of factors: age, gender, relative status of the individuals, who touches whom, on what parts of the body, and under what circumstances



# Touching as Non-verbal Communication

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- Touching is the most personal non-verbal form of communication
- Meaning of touching varies from culture to culture
- Cultures considered “high-touch” include Mediterranean cultures, Arabs, Jews, some eastern Europeans
- Cultures considered “low touch” include English, Germans, northern Europeans, and many Asian cultures
- Cultures have well-defined, implied/understood, systems of rules and meanings of touching





# Touching, continued

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- Not all touching is work-appropriate
- Types of touching include:
  - Patting, stroking, licking
  - Slapping, punching, pinching, kicking
  - Shaking (hands, body parts)
  - Kissing, holding, embracing
  - Laying on of hands (shoulders, arms, other parts)
  - Grooming, guiding



# Examples of Touching: Greetings Around the World

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- Brazil: women kiss and are kissed; men embrace men
- Germany: handshake between men; one kiss for women
- France/Belgium: two kisses in Paris; three in Belgium; four in Brittany
- Russia: Both men and women kiss each other
- Japan: bowing; lower status person bows lower than higher status person
- China: “Have you eaten rice today?” = How are you?
- Native Americans: Silence until the two people become comfortable with each other
- West African: Handshake with a snap of the fingers; handholding while talking/walking



# Case Study Scenario

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A newly tenured, Chinese-born, female faculty member in a U.S. university, a mature (older than the faculty member) male graduate student from Nigeria, and a young, white female American research administrator.

The faculty member is on sabbatical leave out of the country and has asked the graduate student to manage her lab and continue his research.

The graduate student, monitoring the faculty member's e-mail, notices a grant opportunity to establish academic collaborations with African universities in designated countries, including his own.



# Case Study, continued

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As an experienced professional in his own country, with strong political contacts, the graduate student decides to apply for the grant—without seeking guidance either from the faculty mentor or the research administrator.

He drafts a narrative and budget, contacts colleagues at a Nigerian university for letters of agreement, and then comes to the research administrator for help with the forms.

He is stunned to learn that he cannot submit the electronic grant application himself, that he cannot be the PI when he believes he is fully qualified, and that we are not willing to get around the process. He says it's just a lot of red tape that can be taken care of—by money, influence, and persistence.



# Case Study Discussion Questions

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- This scenario illustrates a variety of problems with intercultural communication.
- What are some of these issues? Why?
- What should/could the research administrator have done sooner, better, differently?
- How can research administrators prevent or better prepare faculty and graduate students for future situations like this?
- Are there any mentoring/training issues illustrated here? Are there any research integrity issues?



# How We Can Make a Difference: Multiple Races, Gender, Ethnicity

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- Recognize cultural characteristics and traits of staff members and researchers/faculty
- Monitor our own behavior
- Respect differences
- Review policies, procedures, forms, documents, language for cultural bias
- Initiate training sessions for staff
- Seek input and feedback from faculty and staff clientele served



# Effective Intercultural Communication

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- Intercultural communication is not easy
- Effective intercultural communication includes:
  - Written, oral and nonverbal communication skills
  - Respect for differences and tolerance of ambiguity
  - Flexibility
  - Suspension of assumptions and judgments
  - Willingness to see the other person's point of view
  - Time and practice



# Parting Thoughts

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- Expectation of consistency and predictability in professional relationships.
- Stereotyping is “out” and etiquette is “in.”
- Think about your own situation and working environment.
- Use the materials in this presentation to determine your research administration culture and generational workplace readiness.
- Reflect on our discussion, examples and ideas.
- Observe situations that invite change.
- Decide what you can and will change.
- Not sure? ASK! Use this information as a guide, but not as the end-all.





# Thanks

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## Questions?

For Questions and Follow-up

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