

# Diversity Among Small Group Members

Chapter 4



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## Definition of Diversity



Describes the joining of individuals who differ in cultural, demographic, and cognitive backgrounds.



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## Definition of Diversity



### Homogenous groups

Groups comprised of members similar in cultural, demographic, and cognitive backgrounds

### Heterogeneous groups

Groups comprised of members who differ in cultural, demographic, and cognitive backgrounds

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## Positive Outcomes of Diversity



1. Diverse members bring more options to a group than homogenous members
2. Diverse members may be more efficient in problem solving as a result of their unique experiences
3. Diverse groups achieve a high degree of task cohesion

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## Negative Outcomes of Diversity



1. Lack of participation is more likely to occur among those members who believe they represent the minority in a small group
2. Members of diverse groups have less affect for one another than members of homogeneous groups

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## Cultural Diversity

Power Distance,  
Uncertainty Avoidance,  
Individualism-Collectivism,  
& Time Orientation



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## Power Distance



Refers to the inequality that exists between a less powerful person and a more powerful person

### High power distance culture

Individuals with less power do not dispute the control other individuals have over them

### Low power distance culture

Equality among all individuals is stressed

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## Uncertainty Avoidance



Refers to the amount of stress that a culture associates with an unknown future

### High uncertainty avoidant cultures

Cultures that are not accepting of uncertainty

### Low uncertainty avoidant cultures

Cultures that are accepting of uncertainty

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## Uncertainty Avoidance



Individuals in high uncertainty cultures try to avoid human error as much as possible by implementing technology, instituting rigid rules, and stressing efficiency and task orientation

Individuals in low uncertainty cultures are more creative and relationally oriented, yet may experience issues with punctuality and precision

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## Individualism-Collectivism



Refers to whether attention is focused on the group or the individual

### Individualistic cultures

Values the individual over the group

### Collectivistic cultures

Values the group over the individual

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## Time Orientation



Refers to how quickly a culture assumes important aspects of life should develop

### Long-term oriented cultures

Believe work and thoughts should be focused on the future

### Short-term oriented cultures

Believe work and thoughts should be focused on the present

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## Demographic Diversity: Sex and Gender



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## Demographic Diversity: Sex and Gender



### Sex (i.e., male, female)

Refers to the biological difference between men and women

### Gender (i.e., masculinity, femininity)

Refers to the social beliefs and values associated with being male or female

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## Sex Differences in Small Group Communication



Sex differences exist in how group members communicate, but not in regard to group leadership

In mixed sex groups:

- Males use more instrumental, or task-related, communication
- Males more frequently interrupt and reroute conversations
- Females focus more on expressive, or relationally-oriented, communication
- Females contribute less to group discussions

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## Gender Differences in Small Group Communication



### Masculine

Individuals who possess high levels of masculine behavior and low levels of feminine behavior

### Feminine

Individuals who possess high levels of feminine behavior and low levels of masculine behavior

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## Gender Differences in Small Group Communication



Cultural stereotyped behaviors associated with gender

Masculine individuals gauge achievement by wealth and status, are motivated by competition, and resolve conflict by actively fighting

Feminine individuals gauge achievement by relationships, are motivated by cooperation, and resolve conflict through negotiation and problem solving

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## Gender Differences in Small Group Communication



Two Additional Gender Types

Androgynous

Individuals who possess high levels of both masculine and feminine behaviors

Undifferentiated

Individuals who possess low levels of both masculine and feminine behaviors

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## Gender Differences in Small Group Communication



Final note on gender in small groups

Of the four gender categories, androgynous individuals have the potential to be highly competent communicators because they can enact behaviors, either masculine or feminine, that are most appropriate for the situation

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# Cognitive Diversity: Learning Styles




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## Learning Styles



Refers to individuals' preferences for acquiring information in a learning environment and influence how individuals listen to and present information

Thinking, Watching, Doing, Feeling

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	Thinking + Doing	Watching + Feeling	Thinking + Watching	Feeling + Doing
Style	Converger	Diverger	Assimilator	Accomodator
Preferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Problem-Solving</li> <li>•Deduction</li> <li>•Practical Applications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Imagination</li> <li>•Brainstorming</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Abstract thinking</li> <li>•Induction</li> <li>•Logic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Action</li> <li>•Risk taking</li> <li>•Trial and error</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	Hasty decisions	Trouble reaching decisions	Trouble creating practical solutions	Difficulty completing tasks in timely manner

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## Communication Traits as a Reflection of Diversity



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## Communication Traits



The communicative traits of group members reflect the cultural and demographic diversity encountered in a small group

Men and women can also differ in their communication traits

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## A Final Note



In work groups, diversity is not limited to culture, demographic, or cognitive diversity.

Diversity also can emerge in the forms of informational diversity, value diversity, and age, attitudes, beliefs, and values

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## A Final Note



Group members must resist engaging in ethnocentrism, which refers to the tendency for individuals to judge and evaluate another group based on their ingroup's values, attitudes, and behaviors

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