4th European Member Care Consultation Paper
MULTICULTURAL TEAMS
by Lianne Roembke

1. THE QUESTION NO ONE ASKS IN MULTICULTURAL TEAMS

Which (or whose) cultural values should be the norms in a Multicultural Team?

Precedent:

Apostle Paul 1. Corinthians 9:19-23
Vs 12 – we put up with anything rather than hinder the Gospel of Christ.
Vs 20 – to the Jews, as Jew, etc.
Vs 22b Conclusion: I have become **all** things
to **all** people
so that by **all** possible means I might save some.
I do this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

Two conclusions which are major guidelines for us in multicultural teams:

1. *"The normative culture to which all team members adapt is the host culture, not the cultures of one another."*

2. *The definition of adaptation: "removing the cultural obstacles which hinder the clear, credible communication of the Gospel".[1]*

MOVING IN THE DIRECTION OF

THE HOST CULTURE

M-C TEAM
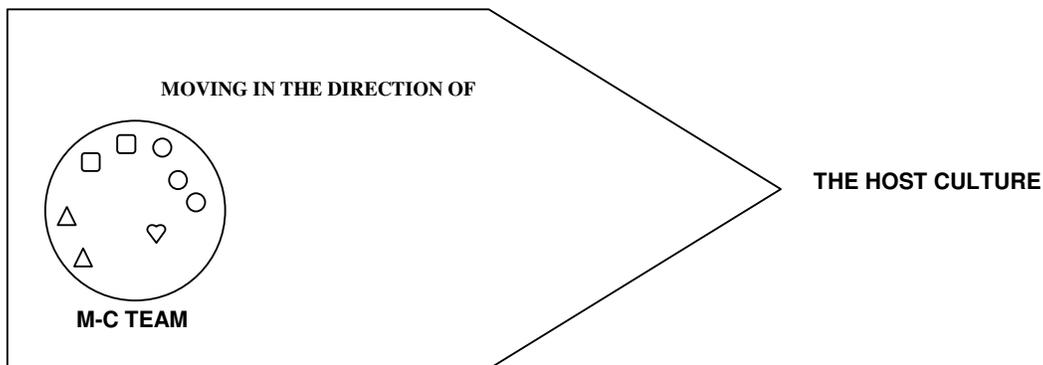
2. Advantages of Multicultural Teams

*reflects the body of Christ more fully
*offers a variety of persons with whom new Christians and non-Christians can identify
*no one denomination or brand of Christianity is elevated
*offers a breath and depth of experiences, a richness
*obvious interdependency
*network of resources
*especially necessary in pioneer situations
*keeps the Message purer from cultural tainting
*barriers and non-essentials are more easily seen and filtered out
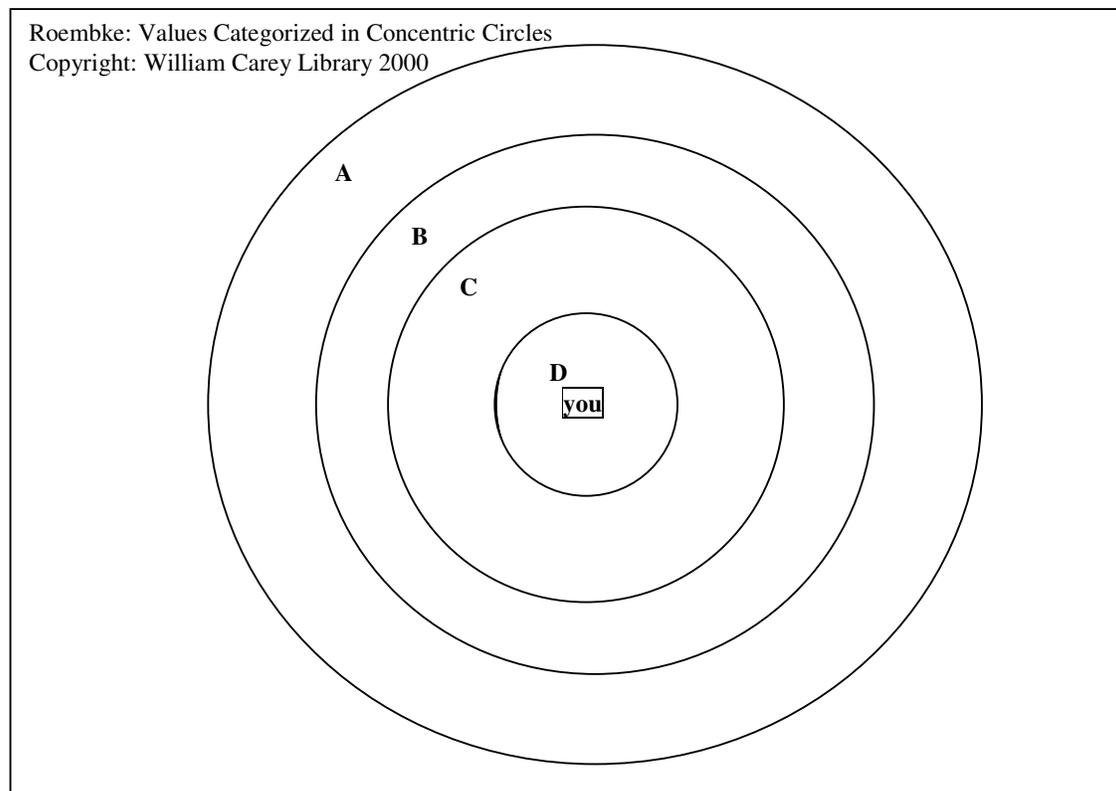*foretaste of that day when all peoples will praise God together

---

[1] Lianne Roembke, *Building Credible Multicultural Teams* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2000)
Copyright: Roembke, Lianne. *Building Credible Multicultural Teams.* Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2000.

3. Core Values in Concentric Circles

One can view one's personality as a set of concentric circles, with the innermost circle of values being those held to more dearly and, therefore, the values harder to give up or change. A good exercise would be to begin to evaluate one's personal values according to the resistance to change one senses: Circle A represents values one can change without feeling any loss or struggle. Circle B represents values one sees the need to change and intends to as one can. There may be felt resistance but it is mostly related to the comfort of habit, not real conviction about the inherent worth of the value. Circle C represents values one struggles with greatly to change; the need to change may or may not be clear, or the values themselves are closely linked to the perception of oneself. Circle D represents values one holds so dearly it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to change. The estimation of these values will be different from person to person.
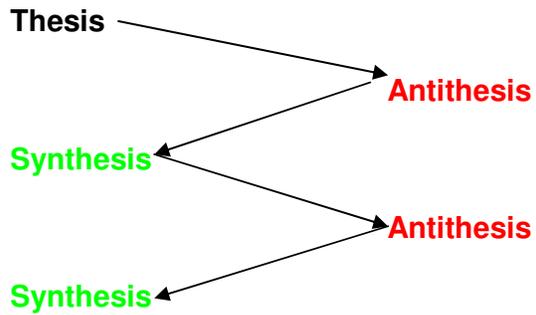
The list of values to be considered is endless. One can start with the more obvious: food, eating habits, dress, courtesy and manners, concept of time, concept of personal space, modes of transportation, form of housing, language, pronunciation, methods of hospitality, planning and scheduling of time, lifestyle, use of finances, view of property, concept of privacy, sanitary facilities, cleanliness, orderliness, punctuality, egalitarianism, health care, children's education, views of dating and marriage, roles of women and men, concept of freedom, methods of discussion, decision-making (logic), leadership style, measures of success, etc. (One can add to the list as one becomes more aware of one's own values or those of the new culture.)

And then the less academic but most important part of the exercise: Evaluate with *national* friends and colleagues, which areas are necessary for credibility, which add to credibility, which are relatively neutral, which would detract from credibility (with the changes implied, of course). These should all be validated as well. Underlying this process one will sense either resistance and tension and/or the moving of the Spirit to be willing to be made willing to change in crucial areas.

Roembke: Values Categorized in Concentric Circles
Copyright: William Carey Library 2000

A

B

C

D
you

12. PATTERNS OF LOGIC

1. DIALECTIC

Thesis

Antithesis

Synthesis

Antithesis

Synthesis

2. LINEAR

1. Point One
2. Point Two
3. Point Three
4. Summary

3. CONTEXTUAL

4. EXISTENTIAL