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**COMPARISON OF DEAF AND
HEARING COMMUNICATION VALUES**

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LINDA SIPLE: Good morning everyone. My presentation this morning talks about intercultural communication. The goals of my presentation today are to help you understand yourself as a cultural communicator and to become more aware of yourself as a cultural communicator. I think often deaf people aren't aware that they are a cultural communicator different from the general population. So that's really the goal of this presentation.

We're going to spend some time talking about the different value systems of deaf and hearing people. We're also going to talk about some specific values. Individualism is one, collectivism is another one, and I have some what are called, critical incidents. They're kind of like stories that involve communication conflict that illustrate how these values come in conflict.

My Ph.D. study is in intercultural communication, and I've also taught courses in it, specifically for our sign language interpreting program. We have a B.S. degree at NTID and students take courses in I.C.C. intercultural communication.

According to M. Singer, (1987), "we experience everything in the world not as it is but as the world comes to us through our culture." This is a really significant quote that I wanted to share with you. It sets the stage for what I'm going to talk about. I want to give you two really great examples of research related to intercultural communication and how it impacts on what we perceive.

A man named Bagby did the first study. This study from the 50s is a wonderful study. He studied two groups of children, the first group from rural Mexico and the other group from rural America. The children were very young and had not been exposed to each other's culture. He then used a stereogram. Do you remember the Viewmaster when you were a kid? Okay. It's just like that. You looked through it with both eyes and saw the pictures in 3-D. Bagby put in different pictures for each eye. He had a picture of a bullfight for one eye, and for the other eye he had a picture of a baseball game. He asked the

children what they saw in the stereogram. It's probably not surprising to you that the Mexican children saw the bullfight, and the American children saw the baseball game. Interesting, how their mind pushed out one picture and went to the familiar one. So that's one study that shows how our brain really functions to manipulate what we see.

Guilmet did a second study, which is very interesting. He also had two groups of people, a group of Caucasian mothers and a group of Navajo mothers. He then showed a videotape of children playing and interacting with each other. He showed the same videotape to both groups. The Navajo mothers saw the behaviors and described them as negative, aggressive behaviors that should be punished or that needed to be corrected. The Caucasian mothers saw the same behaviors as very positive. They saw the children as being assertive. They swathe children with good behaviors that should be encouraged.

Again, culture influences what you see and how you interpret. The value systems that we're raised with really influence how we perceive the world. Our value systems tell us really what is positive, what's negative, what's good, what's bad.

Now I want to talk a little bit about what's considered American culture, and I'm labeling it "hearing culture," because the two groups that I'm talking about today are deaf and hearing people. Hearing people are often the same as your typical American culture, the American culture often seen by Americans as, well, "we really don't have a culture." It's kind of this melting pot and we don't have one culture. Well, interestingly enough, we do have a culture. Here are some of the value systems, which I think you'll recognize, that exist within our American culture. Individualism is at the top of the list. Americans are considered the most individualistic culture in the world, and it gets us into trouble a lot. Here's the list: Individualism, privacy, equality, materialism, time, goodness and humanity and competition, which in the United States is a good value.

So what is individualism? The U.S. is ranked the top in the individualism scale for those people who go out and measure those things. Americans are definitely at the top of that scale. We've all been trained since we were very small children to be very individualistic. Our language reflects this value. For example, here are some phrases that reflect individualism. "God helps those who help themselves." "You have to decide for yourself." "You made our bed, now lie in it." "Fend for yourself." "Paddle your own canoe." I'm sure all of you are very familiar with these phrases that reflect valuing individualism.

Our behavior reflects values. We encourage our children to be individuals, to be independent. I happen to have a brother-in-law who is Indian. He's married to my sister who is Irish. It's been very interesting watching the family when the children were being raised. When my niece was seven or eight years old, she came home and told her mom and dad that she had been invited to a sleep-over. Now, her father, born and raised in India has a fairly limited experience with American children. When his daughter said she wanted to go on a sleep-over, he was kind of shocked. He didn't understand why parents would

allow their child to go to another home to sleep. Children should stay in their own home. Going overnight to another's house is not a thing that you want to encourage.

It was a very interesting process to see my brother-in-law and sister have to discuss this. She said, "Well, that's part of encouraging independence." He asked, "Well, why? Why do you want to encourage independence? You should be encouraging dependence, dependence on the family." It was an interesting process to watch as their children grew up, my brother-in-law struggling with the American way of raising a child. Our American behavior reflects this valuing independence, self-reliance, individual accomplishment, autonomy, and self-sufficiency. Our American heroes are people we admire also because they're rugged individualists. In our history, we often look up to people who did it on their own.

Another aspect of individualism is privacy. Americans, although we are fairly open people, are also very private people. So we have a lot of privacy taboos in our culture, and I've given some examples. We don't read another person's mail. I can give a real, live example of what just happened to me the other day. My neighbors were out at their cabin still, so they asked us to pick up their mail. We went to their house and we found a legal document taped to their door. It was a little embarrassing but, I had to take it off the door and put in the slot to be sure it was safe. I made sure that I didn't look at the legal document mail. There was this mail staring me in the face and I had to take it off the door and put it in the door slot because I didn't want to violate their privacy.

I want to introduce this idea of co-cultures. Co-cultures for those of you who remember your sociology or anthropology were called subcultures. The new and improved term for subculture is "co-culture" because these are cultures that exist alongside of a larger culture, such as the United States culture.

A co-culture is a group who shares communication values that are different from the dominant culture.

Co-cultures are fascinating to study because for them to survive in a dominant culture, they have to be bicultural. They have to know how to interact with the dominant culture and also interact with their own culture.

Thus, co-cultures possess bicultural abilities and they've learned how to manipulate their values to be successful in both cultures.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Would consider hard of hearing people a separate culture? You mentioned deaf because they have their own culture. What about hard of hearing people?

LINDA SIPLE: I'm going to postpone answering that question until the end of the presentation. Then I want you to answer the question, whether you think deaf and hard of hearing people really occupy the same culture.

So when you look at research on co-cultures, you find interesting similarities with the mainstream culture. Co-culture members, when they interact with the dominant culture, frequently report low

communication satisfaction. This is not a theme just for black individuals or Native Americans. It's a theme that you see across all research in all co-culture groups, including deaf and hard of hearing people. Co-culture people also report a sense of unequal power distribution, which of course leads to low satisfaction for communication. Lack of respect is also frequently reported. Another common theme is a sense of being invisible. They are there every day, they're working there every day, but they have a sense of being invisible within the group that they're working with.

Now I'd like to shift and talk about a specific co-culture, that of deaf people. I have not found anywhere any documentation that says, "These are deaf culture values." But I found evidence of these in a variety of places. I have found deaf culture values in my own interactions with deaf people, reading, and watching deaf people interact with hearing people who don't share the same values. So this is kind of a collection of values that I have seen that I think are a part of deaf culture. You'll probably find pieces of these in books by Carol Padin, and Tom Humphreys, and other people who have written about Deaf culture.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: On your handout, what do you mean by "open communication?"

LINDA SIPLE: I'm going to talk a little bit more about that. It's the opposite of privacy, meaning there are no secrets. In a collective culture, the goal is for the group, not the individual. There's an emphasis on pooling resources, not my resources and your resources, but that we all pool resources together. There's also a sense of duty to share information. Loyalty and strong identification with the group is valued. Deaf heroes are people admired for helping other deaf people. I recall clearly one of the big heroes that some of you may remember was Fred Schreiber. Fred Schreiber was seen as a hero because of his ability to help deaf people. He did some amazing things and still today, through the N.A.D., he is considered one of the top 10 heroes of that organization.

Open communication. If you think about it for a moment, you can't have a collective without open communication. You can't have a group of people all working toward the same thing if you have closed communication. It requires open communication. There are no secrets. It's important to pass along personal information, and that passing along shows that people care about each other. What are the taboos? The taboos are withholding information.

Now the stage is set. We have a hearing culture that has very strong values around individualism and privacy, and then we have another culture that has very strong values around collectivism and open communication. I think you can see the stage is set for a lot of communication conflict between these two groups.

On this stage, I'd like to share with you stories that are called "critical incidents," CIR. These are reports of experiences that show varying degrees of communication conflict. They are real things. They are things that either I personally observed happening, or deaf and hard of hearing people reported to me.

The purpose of looking at CIRs is that they can help us see into our own communication, and also to understand the behavioral perspective of the other culture. Originally, this presentation was given at NTID with the goal of IMPROVING communication between deaf and hearing people in NTID. And you're thinking, what? NTID? Why would they need to improve their communication? The point is that we did, and we do. We have such a large percentage of deaf and hearing people working, living close, side-by-side every day, that there's a lot of opportunity for communication conflict.

NTID faculty collected these CIRs. Here are the themes I've divide these stories into: Daily communication; meetings and group interactions, which are always difficult; and one-on-one communication. This is a quote from a deaf person. "I think when two people approach each other from a distance, both deaf and hearing people seem to check out each other. It's not really eye contact yet. When deaf people get nearer, they almost always make eye contact, smile, and nod, and say 'hi' -- whatever. It doesn't matter if we know each other. However, as hearing people get closer, if they know you, they will make eye contact, and maybe smile, nod, et cetera. If they don't know you, they will avoid eye contact, look at the floor or look straight ahead. I think this is rude and very cold."

This person is commenting on their daily interaction with hearing people walking down a hallway, and looking for some kind of connection. Some black students on the R.I.T. campus where NTID is located, have reported that they really felt isolated and one of the reasons was white students divert their eyes when passing a black student. Black students belong to a collective culture.

It's fascinating that we've got this hearing culture -- "I don't know you, I'm going to divert my eyes" -- within a place where we're all working together. And it's fascinating that this happens with somewhat regularity.

Here's another one: "I think deaf people's communication distance is much farther than hearing people's. For example, when I walk down a long hall, I often start talking to a friend when she is 50-75 feet away."

In sign language you can do that. "A hearing person would have to shout. Another example, when I turn the corner, I immediately hone in on the two people at the far end of the hallway. I immediately know that they are hearing because I see them talking and not signing. Deaf eyes are more aware and more sensitive. When I'm about 10 feet away, they might become aware of me as a deaf person and start signing. But what about the other 90 feet? This makes me feel invisible. The other thing that bothers me is that when they become aware of me, they just start signing to each other and no eye contact with me, no hello, no acknowledgement. Now they see me, but I'm still invisible."

Here's another one: "I don't think hearing people understand before an interaction can start, you must first have eye contact. It's very rude to just take the paper or the money from a deaf person and avoid eye contact. I feel ignored. I feel invisible."

Again, when I go food shopping, I do a test. When it's time to give the money, I don't give the money until the girl or boy looks at me. Sometimes, I have to wait a long time because they're so focused on what they're doing. The amount of money is right there, and you should just write the check and give it to them. Bank tellers are the same way. The focus. No eye contact.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Do you think that's more geographical? In the Midwest, all the checkers look at you.

LINDA SIPLE: Fascinating. This woman suspects it may be geographical. She feels in the Midwest she gets a lot more eye contact than in the east, and the south as well. Interesting. So it's the east. Fascinating. That's why they say that New Yorkers are cold. Boston, too?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: It may not be where you grew up. It may be because you're living in that area. My daughter lived in New York, and she just moved to Colorado three weeks ago. And she said people in Colorado, in Boulder are much more friendly than in New York, but she has not met anyone who grew up there. They're from all over the United States

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I know when in the New York City metropolitan area, it can be very dangerous to make eye contact with anyone. That's something I learned very early, not to make contact with strangers.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I grew up in New York, too, and I heard that's true, also, you don't look at just anybody. If you smile at somebody the wrong way, they'll shoot you. But New England, Boston, I found it colder than New York in terms of just day to day, like in a store, whatever.

LINDA SIPLE: It's important for you to remember that these reports are coming from a work environment, where people in theory are supposed to know each other. So that's another interesting aspect to these stories.

Let's go to the next CIR. "I really hate it when I'm in the middle of a conversation with a hearing person and all of a sudden he or she looks away and grabs the phone. I understand that the person has to answer the phone, but this says to me that the phone is more important than I am. A more polite way would be to hold up a finger and stop the conversation and tell me the phone is ringing, then answer it."

LINDA SIPLE: Next one. "People are very impatient. They are not willing to take the time to communicate. I often feel conversations with hearing people are rushed and superficial." This idea of superficial relationships is another common theme that you'll see in this co-culture literature, that people who come from collective cultures often report that Americans in general are very superficial people, that they don't have deep, long-lasting relationships with people. This is their perspective of typical American people. Now, we do have long-lasting relationships, but the perception is that we are very superficial because of the way we communicate with people.

Another CIR. "I was standing with my back to the conference room door telling a hearing colleague about something that happened. All of a sudden, my boss came up to me and looked very annoyed with me. She said 'come on, let's get going' and motioned me towards the occurrence room. Later, I found out my boss had come to the door and had called everyone back into the meeting, but the hearing colleague never told me. She just let me keep talking. I was really humiliated. Why would anyone deliberately make me look bad?"

AUDIENCE MEMBER: The perspective of hearing people in relationship to deaf people? It all seems one-sided.

LINDA SIPLE: It is. I'm sure that I could do another complete presentation about hearing people's perceptions of deaf people, but that really isn't the point for this presentation today.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I was thinking about what you're saying about privacy and conversations. I was thinking about an incident that my deaf cousin told me about that happened in our family. My great-aunt and uncle were also deaf and my cousin would be reading everyone's lips in a conversation. I heard that my grandmother and one of my cousins, his parents were deaf would cover their mouths so that my great-aunt couldn't see their conversation.

LINDA SIPLE: Yes, deaf people will frequently report that behavior. Again, how can you maintain a collective if you're keeping secrets in the culture?

Meetings are very interesting places because often at NTID, we have deaf and hearing people in the same room at the same time. We may have meetings using SimCom, simultaneous communication, speaking and signing at the same time. Sometimes, we have an all ASL meeting where there is no spoken language, but there's pretty rare. The more common thing is the use of SimCom, which in itself can create several problems.

We have a big department. Often we don't know who is talking and it really bothers me that people start talking without first getting eye contact. Again, the eye contact issue comes up and hearing people automatically speak without first checking to be sure everyone is looking. From another CIR. "Deaf people are trying to read the handout and miss out on the discussion, or we see the discussion and miss the information on the handout. We can't win." A very typical situation is where hearing people often expect "multitasking." You listen and read at the same time. You watch the computer and listen to the instruction at the same time. Clearly, deaf and hard of hearing people can't do that.

"I think hearing people are very self-centered in meetings. They don't care if I can't see them signing. They won't take responsibility to stand up or walk to the front of the room. I think it's very disrespectful. To me, this says that only hearing people are important." Again, this idea of open communication comes up, making sure that everybody understands, that everyone is part of the collective.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I've been in situations like that. But I also think it's my responsibility to inform the group, to stop and remind them and repeat, "You need to raise your hand." You need to remind them of certain rules so the expectations are clearly spelled out.

LINDA SIPLE: When I get past my little scenarios, we're going to talk about how to improve intercultural communication and I think your point is a great one.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: But if she tells people about what she needs, and then they don't do it, they're being disrespectful.

LINDA SIPLE: Do you think that hearing people think they are being disrespectful?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: No.

LINDA SIPLE: I don't think so, either.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I feel that they do.

LINDA SIPLE: Right, and I agree, too. Here's my SimCom example. In my department meeting, we use SimCom. Everyone can sign, but they won't have a "no voice" meeting, meaning that the meeting would be totally visual. A couple of them have said they think SimCom is best because then everyone is equal. Then why don't I feel equal? Again, remember that comment before about co-cultures, feeling an unequal distribution of power? This is a great example of it, that often deaf people are reporting that because of the use of SimCom, they may feel a disproportionate distribution of power in a meeting. If I had to measure the communication, I'd say 70% was speaking and 30% was signing. However, if you look at the research of SimCom there is great SimCom, but there's also lousy SimCom, and lousy SimCom often is missing a lot of the important aspects of language. Yes, they are all signing all the time, but the message I get is missing a lot of information. I have to work very hard to understand what's going on.

So now the next group of CIRs we're look at are these from one-to-one interactions. "The other day I was trying to explain how I needed a project done to our secretary. She didn't seem to understand what I wanted, so I explained it again. Later, my boss told me she complained that I was talking to her like she was an idiot. I don't get it. She sat there with a blank look on her face, and then she complains." This scenario is talking about hearing people's tendency not to use facial expressions, not to use what is called back-channel feedback, that they often sit with no expression, so the assumption is they are not understanding.

Here's another one: "Deaf people are masters at making themselves understood. They will change how they communicate because sharing information is very important." I was in the bathroom before this presentation, and I can tell you I was watching two women talking with each other. They were having difficulty communicating with each other, and the amount of effort going in to this conversation was amazing. One said, "Okay, let me say it a different way. Let me write it down. Let me..." because it

was important to share the communication. You see this everywhere here this week. This importance to communicate is a very common theme for deaf and hard of hearing people.

"Most hearing people have one way to communicate with deaf people. Too bad if you don't understand. I think hearing people value talking, but they don't value communication."

AUDIENCE MEMBER: They love to talk, but they hate to repeat.

(Laughter)

LINDA SIPLER: That goes back to that lack of patience with communication. Here's another one. "Deaf and hearing people use SimCom differently. Deaf SimCom emphasizes the visual aspect of the message, and de-emphasizes the auditory aspect. The concepts make sense to me. The message is spatial. The language is still mostly English but that's okay because now it's visually accessible English. Hearing SimCom emphasizes the auditory aspect of English. For me, the concepts are frequently unclear. The structure and thinking style follow hearing rules. One-to-one, I'm usually fine, but in a group, it's very hard to follow. I see a lot of signs and words, but no communication."

Again, if you recall we talked about co-cultures having low communication satisfaction. This is another good example of that. "Hearing SimCom is like reading the dictionary. Deaf SimCom is like reading a novel or viewing a movie. I get it."

So who needs to change? How are we going to solve this awful conflict that's going on? There's a lot of research that talks about how to improve intercultural communication. I just thought I would share this with you in hopes that in your own individual situations, this might be helpful in doing in-service trainings or workshops that you provide to people to help them understand better the communication issues that you face.

The deaf and hard of hearing co-culture is very experienced in accommodating everybody else. That's what we do every single day.

General hearing society is clueless as to the extent of communication dissatisfaction they cause. People don't realize that they're acting in a disrespectful way. They don't realize that their lack of eye contact is causing low communication satisfaction.

So the first thing that one needs to do to improve intercultural communication is to know yourself, to understand where you're coming from as a communicator. Whether you are white, black, Native American, deaf, hard of hearing, Latino, it doesn't matter. You need to understand where you're coming from. Ask yourself, "What is my value system that's influencing how I communicate?"

Empathy is understanding the other person's perspective. We're going to talk a little bit more about that. Understand that there are cultural differences in listening. Understand about either listening auditorially or listening visually. Having empathy is another way to develop communication flexibility. When I

teach my course in intercultural communication for hearing people, I ask students the first day, what are the values that guide their communication? They say: "What do you mean?" The class doesn't know how to respond. What are those things inside of you that tell you how to communicate? "I don't know. I don't know." They're clueless. They have no idea they're being guided by a set of values. So that's the first thing we establish.

The second thing, most hearing people rarely experience poor communication. They don't know what it feels like to get lousy communication. "That doesn't happen to us," they say. "In fact, we try to turn off communication." People will tell you, "Oh, I relish that quiet in the car on the way home." Or "I relish the idea of not having to communicate with somebody." For deaf people, that's not true.

Most hearing people are not aware of uncertainties in communication. When you meet a person for the first time, your goal is to reduce uncertainty, right? Think about the first time you meet a person. What do you do? Name, name? Where are you from? Where did you go to school? Who do you know? These questions show that uncertainty reduction happens during communication. Hearing people often don't experience uncertainty.

Hearing people are often totally oblivious to the fact that there is a difference in communication values and how they impact communication.

Most American white people are not aware that there is a different set of values guiding the communication amongst African-Americans and black individuals. They're also totally unaware of communication styles. So empathy, the idea of understanding what life is like in someone else's shoes, is based on accepting differences and building on them in a positive manner. That means understanding the experiences, feelings, and thoughts and attitudes and cultures of deaf and hard of hearing people.

The number one reason why I share these stories with people is that they understand the perspective of deaf people. "Deaf people think that? Deaf people feel insulted when I do this?" Yes. That's the first step in building and improving empathy is seeing life from a deaf person's perspective.

For hearing people, learning and understanding how deaf people perceive things is learning to pay attention in a different way. "Oh, if I do this, this, and this, it's perceived in this way." So now I'm starting to pay attention in a different way.

I'll give you a real, live example. The first time I heard a black student on the R.I.T. campus complain that white people don't give eye contact, it made me feel invisible because of it. Wow. Now, I am very careful about my eye contact when I'm walking across campus. So all of a sudden now, I understand life from their perspective, and now I need to pay attention in a different way.

By employing empathy, hearing people will benefit from learning how to pay attention in a different way. Learning how to use culturally acceptable behaviors, for example, using eye contact is learning to accept differences.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: My biggest frustration at work is I think hearing people don't value listening or trying to comprehend 100% of the message. It seems to me they tune out a lot of things. Ten years ago I was on a special project. We had a meeting. I pulled somebody aside afterward, and, asked about certain things they missed. That person said, "Oh, I wasn't paying attention. I was thinking about what my date and I will do tonight." That showed me I spend way too much time trying to hear everything. Now I sit back and if I miss something it doesn't bother me because hearing people miss a lot, too. It's too hard for anybody to get 100% of the message, I think.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I can't hear so I have to remind them I hear very little. I say, "I need to lip-read you. I need eye contact with you." I take it as my responsibility to tell the hearing person what I need, what my communication needs are. But oftentimes they forget, so you have to speak for yourself.

LINDA SIPLE: Right, right. And I think it's very frustrating for you to have to repeat that message again, and again and again.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Yes, patience.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I don't think hearing people have the market on rudeness. I mean, it comes from both sides. I was thinking when you were talking about the phone that I agree with that so much. Last night, at the welcome for everyone, someone had her text machine out and she sat there the whole time while I'm trying to have a conversation. They e-mailed the entire time.

I also agree about meetings at work. You tell them over and over, and you sit up front so you can watch everything, and the people in the back are asking the questions. So if it's a have-to meeting, and they make me go, they have to bring in a captioner, or I won't attend. It's a two-way street.

LINDA SIPLE: Let's go through this idea of listening, and then we can open up for discussion. This idea of understanding cultural differences with listening, and that hearing people only know one way to listen -- this way (points to ears). They don't know how to listen with their eyes. That's something that they really have to learn. That's a new way of listening.

Hearing people can benefit from how to be an active listener. They need to understand how to give feedback. They need to indicate, yes, I get it. I understand. And they need to communicate back to you as a deaf/hard of hearing person. They have to learn the importance of eye contact when listening.

Hearing people aren't used to that. They're used to looking away and just listening when they're receiving communication. They don't understand there's a rule of eye contact when you're listening.

Here is one thing I preach to my students all the time, and that, for example, when a deaf person asks them "do you understand?" It's a real question.

Interpreting students sometimes don't understand and lie and say, "oh, yes, I understand," and continue on with the conversation. It's quickly discovered later on that they don't understand what's going on. In a deaf conversation, "do you understand?" is a real question. It's not simply a discourse marker. Hearing people have been taught not to admit that they don't understand. It is a real question, and is a behavior that hearing people really need to understand. It's a question, and it requires a real answer.

Communication flexibility means learning how to communicate in more than one way. I can't tell you how many times I see the bank teller that's near NTID become totally befuddled when a deaf person asks a question. She doesn't know how to communicate in another way with a deaf bank client. It takes four times as long, and it's just a mess. So adapt this idea of showing a tolerance for ambiguity, be a willow, not an oak. Don't be set in one way to communicate.

It's important for hearing people to know which communication behaviors are inflexible and which ones are flexible. They need to develop communication options. If gestures don't work, what else can? They need to learn visual ways to communicate. Again, hearing people are very good at auditory communication, but they're not so good at visual.

To be understood by speech readers, hearing people need not talk real big because that's not natural. Hearing people don't understand that, as you know.

Summing up, we talked about two different groups of people, cultural groups, hearing people who are guided by very strong individualism, closed communication, privacy, and deaf/hard of hearing people who I believe are guided by collective, open communication. Because of these differences, when the two groups interact, there is a lot of communication conflict. The CIR scenarios give you some real-life examples of that conflict.

So how do you solve these problems? Again, as deaf/hard of hearing people, you accommodate communication a lot. And hearing people don't. However, if hearing people are allowed the opportunity to understand what's going on, understand how to improve, they're more likely to do it. It needs to be communicated in a way that they can get it.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Can you give some examples of how to make the communication successful when people don't get it?

LINDA SIPLE: Okay. I'll open it up to the group. Can you give examples?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I have another question I would like to address. I would love to go to next year's ALDA meeting, and have you give this presentation from a hard of hearing point of view instead of the deaf point of view.

LINDA SIPLE: How would it be different? Can you tell me how it would be different?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Many of the things that you had up there for deaf people also apply to us, hard of hearing people. Hard of hearing is an invisible condition. I don't believe there is a hard of hearing culture. I have a deaf sister with a capital D. and so that's a different story. It's frustrating to go out in the hearing world, your own world; yet you're not really hearing. I'm not aware of any hard of hearing culture, and I've been hard of hearing for 50 years.

LINDA SIPLE: Maybe one way to think of this is to change the label. Sometimes what we label things is not all that comfortable. If we label what I'm talking about as visual culture versus hearing or a hearing culture versus a visual culture, it might be a little bit easier to understand the concepts I'm talking about.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: At work I find people talk at me not to me. Then I'm an invisible person, even when my interpreter's there, because they see her, and remember her and don't remember me. I have a deaf co-worker and I have one way of speaking with her. I do that because I am from mixed families; white families and Hispanic families. I say I want a third person on a date. Mom says, "no. Go yourself." Same with hearing-Deaf Community. My brain hurts sometimes to figure out who am I today? Am I an independent person, or is it rah-rah for the group. I don't know. Some days it's hard to decide who I want to be.

LINDA SIPLE: I think your work people could benefit from you talking about the differences in values.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I give deaf awareness out; I pass out earplugs. Put it in. Try it out. Try to communicate without hearing something.

That lasts about a week, and then they forget again, and it's back to square one.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I have a twin sister who went to a school for the deaf. I stayed in the hearing environment; I'm hard of hearing. But I was agreeing with her in a lot of things. We get along really great. She is into the deaf culture very strongly, and I'm with the hearing. So we kind of help each other. When we're out with hearing people, I make sure she understands, and then with Deaf people, she tells me what they're saying, and we kind of connect with that. It's like it doesn't really bother us.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I work in a hearing world. I work with three different cultures. Hispanic, English, and the communication problems I have with my late-deafened friends. When I break eye contact, they stop. I have to tell them, it's okay. I hear you. I understand you. The big identity question for myself is it's not who I am. It's who I'm with that determines what part of myself I quote. It's been a big problem for me to understand, to identify who I am, where am I? This is a big question for myself.

LINDA SIPLE: Interesting. You're giving a wonderful example of a place where you can start changing your behavior and communicating. That is, you said, "When I look away, they stopped talking." That means there is a rule. The rule is I have to keep watching. It is a hard rule, but we can learn it. We may be old dogs, but we can still learn new tricks.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I have values from the hearing culture, and I have values from the deaf culture, but I'm not accepted by either one. Sometimes it seems the deaf culture is more stringent about communicating with them, I mean, you have to use ASL rather than English. Or vice versa. Mostly ASL, I think. I have a harder time trying to cope with communicating in the deaf culture than I do in the hearing culture, and I've been hard of hearing all my life, since I was a year old. So I think it would be helpful to talk about the hard of hearing people's culture.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I would really like to see what specific strategies people have used that have worked for them. I can think of one that has worked for me. I help them accommodate me by asking them to rephrase. Instead of saying, "Repeat, repeat," I say, "Rephrase it, contextually, I hear it better." I wonder what other strategies people have, to help communicate better.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Coping strategies can backfire, too. I was at another meeting where we were discussing a certain technology, and I was following it, and I understood it, but I missed a word, so I asked the person, "Could you repeat that?" This person got really frustrated, flipped over the tablet and started diagramming the whole technology as if I was a total idiot and didn't understand any of it. That was the last time I asked him a question.

LINDA SIPLE: And now we're out of time. Thank you very much for your participation

Dr. Siple is a faculty member at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf, a college of the Rochester Institute of Technology. She received her doctoral degree from the University of New York at Buffalo in Intercultural Communication. This presentation capitalizes on her research expertise in the area of communication conflict between Deaf and hearing people. Dr. Siple is a professor in the Department of ASL and Interpreting Education and has taught in the area of sign language interpreting for more than 25 years.