A Place to Belong: The Library as Prototype for Context Diversity[1]

Roberto A. Ibarra

"The library is no longer a museum for books," said Carol in her presentation to instructional faculty. Gone are signs demanding "QUIET PLEASE" or "NO TALKING." Even the catacomb-like reading rooms with long tables and lamps are being converted into hubs of noisy activity for information/technology centers or a Learning Commons. Carol Botts, a University of New Mexico librarian, was describing a different kind of library culture that co-mingled service with environment. "You can bring in food and drinks in lidded containers," she told us. "We even have a coffee bar with snacks in the lobby for your convenience. You can find places for group study and computers set up for research and word processing. You'll find people sleeping or meeting with friends to socialize and be seen. It's really a place to belong," she concluded.

I knew many academic libraries had changed dramatically since my graduate student days when food was forbidden in the stacks, but the success of large multipurpose bookstores throughout the U.S., and the explosive growth of Internet-driven information systems, apparently spurred many campus libraries to become more user-friendly and community-oriented than ever before (Bennett 2003). Carol had all these elements in her orientation. She made it clear that UNM libraries play multiple roles in developing human relationships within their centers of learning and knowledge. The relaxed library rules, a sense of open architecture and invited intimacy to stay and participate in a community setting was not only intriguing, it also fit with my discoveries about the changing nature diversity in higher education (Ibarra 2001).

Her presentation raised interesting questions related to my current research (Ibarra 2003). Is the turnabout in academic library culture over the last decade mainly a response to the Internet revolution and the concomitant dwindling of library patronage (Bennett 2003; Lushington 2002; Nelson 2003; Strong 2004)? Is it possible that academic libraries also responded and changed, perhaps unknowingly, to shifting demographics associated with gender, ethnicity, different abilities, and even generation? If libraries are consciously or unconsciously reframing their structures and functions to adapt to changing clientele, could these changes

Roberto A. Ibarra is Special Assistant to the Provost and Associate Professor Sociology at the University of New Mexico.

reflect a prototype for a different concept of diversity I was studying?

In the mid to late 1960s, colleges and universities across the country blossomed with special programs for recruitment, admissions, employment, and retention of students labeled "disadvantaged minorities." In attempts to diversify their institutions, academic librarians also began promoting diversity on their campuses, and, over the years, they appear to have created a variety of successful programs (Alire 2001; Alire and Stielow 1995; Jones 2000; Simmons-Welburn 2000). But concepts of diversity have changed over the last decade, and there is evidence that a new paradigm I call context diversity is emerging that may enhance our campuses without relying on traditional affirmative action methods. Academic libraries, which are largely voluntary by nature, may be unconsciously mirroring key features of this new paradigm that is becoming more visible on some campuses today. This paper will explore a number of related questions. First, what is context diversity and how are academic libraries associated with it? What are the different kinds of populations arriving on our campuses today and how are they affecting our academic libraries? Finally, how can we use the principles of context diversity to create academic climates and cultures that foster more community relationships? To begin, we must understand how the pursuit of diversity has changed since the 1960s by tracking three stages or dimensions of diversity: structural diversity, multicultural diversity, and context diversity.

Structural diversity—Helping people adjust to the system

Since 1965, diversity has been driven by legally mandated affirmative action and other laws that encourage our society to create access and special support programs for those who have not had access to our institutions in the past. This concept, sometimes called structural diversity, is characterized as compliance-oriented, recruitment directed, and measured mainly by "head counts," increasing the numbers of underrepresented groups of students, faculty, or staff. The objective is to end discrimination and overcome barriers for access and hiring.

Structural diversity attempts to refine and expand support operations or business functions of our institutions to accommodate affirmative action initiatives and federal compliance laws regarding hiring and admissions processes. Most initiatives are created as add-on or support programs to the primary educational mission of an organization. Structural diversity programs have their strengths and limitations as listed below:

- Structural diversity is short-term and quota driven to raise affirmative action statistics.
- Although the numbers of underrepresented populations increase steadily, they rarely achieve projected outcomes.
- Because Structural Diversity emphasizes human resource functions, such as access, support and remediation, initiatives are often marginalized in our institutions as support functions far removed from the main business of academic work.
- Over time, diversity initiatives simply become a human resource function—hiring faculty and staff or admitting students—to achieve a critical mass of underrepresented populations.
- Structural diversity has had limited success influencing systemic academic culture change.
- Structural diversity does not guarantee a diverse environment. Having more women or minorities or people with disabilities in an organization does not necessarily change the way of doing business.
- Structural diversity has survived serious legal challenges relatively intact, but initiatives are under legal constraints and constant review for future challenges.
- Structural diversity works and provides models of best practices in higher education, but it cannot alone achieve its implied outcome, nor can it address the complex problems regarding diversity in higher education today.

The limitations of structural diversity have not gone unnoticed by academic librarians either. Hankins, Saunders and Situ articulate the problems quite nicely:

> Diversity initiatives address systemic problems within the university as a whole… Minority residency programs, [structural diversity programs] in contrast to diversity initiatives, are short-term and quota-driven to raise affirmative action statistics and are often in response to accreditation threats. They take newly graduated students, insert them into often hostile environments, and expect them

> to address all the problems of diversity that continue to simmer and stew among faculty. (2003, 1)

How to manage diversity and the difficulties encountered by diverse populations is a constant concern with structural diversity initiatives. William Welburn recently shared the results of his informal review of diversity in library science literature. He discovered that despite articles describing the need for diversity, there is a total lack of research on managing it in academic libraries (W. Welburn, personal communication, January 12, 2005). Despite its limitations, structural diversity remains a vital and necessary part of current campus diversity initiatives.

Multicultural diversity—Helping sensitize the system to cultural/gender differences

During the 1970s and 1980s student advocacy groups challenged colleges and universities to infuse cultural and gender issues (multiculturalism) into their institutions in an attempt to educate majority populations about these critical issues, and to help retention efforts by including the issues, history, and literature of diverse groups into college culture and curriculums. Underrepresented populations, valued for their potential to recruit and retain others, contributed by helping institutions become more aware of multicultural issues. Multicultural diversity addresses variables for success among underrepresented populations, such as negative campus climates, the lack of multicultural awareness, and institutional discrimination (i.e., racism, sexism, etc.), that continue to plague our colleges and universities.

Multicultural diversity tends to celebrate differences or cultural/gender uniqueness by introducing multicultural and gendered ideas into the classroom and onto the campus. The objective is to reform institutions to meet the needs of an increasingly pluralistic society by trying to change campus attitudes (climate) and curriculum toward more positive and inclusive views of gender, ethnicity and racialized issues. The solutions include implementing campus-wide minority action plans, increasing the number and type of student service programs, creating cultural and/or sexual harassment awareness workshops, and, most importantly, creating new ethnic and women studies programs.

The impact of multicultural diversity, which has been mixed, comes with its own set of strengths and limitations listed below:

- Viewing its strengths, cultural and gender issues are in the foreground of campus awareness and activities.
- The growth, but limited expansion, of ethnic and women studies programs over the years have begun to influence academic core requirements and library collections as well.
- The definitions of diversity and the kinds of underrepresented populations have been expanded to include other federally recognized protected groups (i.e., Hispanics, Southeast Asian refugees, people with disabilities).
- The only notable academic cultural change over the years has been a shift from negative perceptions of student remediation toward more positive approaches about student preparedness.
- Among its limitations, it is difficult to get the large number of culturally different populations properly included in the curriculum
- Multicultural initiatives along with affirmative action laws have become battlegrounds in the culture wars between conservative and liberal groups over the ways to promote diversity on campus.
- Despite attention given to curriculum change, the focus of multicultural diversity remains rooted in student affairs. Little if any attention is directed toward enhancing academic affairs—the primary educational arena determining the success or failure of nearly all college students.
- Diversity initiatives remain predominantly student support or human resource functions aimed at refining recruitment and retention programs.
- The increases in underrepresented populations among student, faculty, or staff in higher education have been slow to materialize and, despite multicultural interventions, there are still too few women and underrepresented populations in targeted academic areas.

Reassessing "the problem" of a lack of diversity

In 2003, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of the University of Michigan on two affirmative action cases that pushed higher education toward creating new directions for diversity in the 21st century. The court found affirmative action still viable, but it also encouraged institutions to change traditional concepts

for increasing diversity within the next decades. Academe must respond to this challenge, and the question is how to do it.

Clearly, we must think beyond current models. Our progress depends on how we reexamine a basic assumption that we need do little more than recruit and retain people of different heritage, gender, or ability to achieve equity and diversity in our institutions. Higher education is locked into a belief that success will be accomplished only through a combination of structural and multicultural strategies. There is another way, but educators have difficulty questioning the basic assumption, and they have grown accustomed to treating symptoms (i.e., the lack of diversity) as if they are the problems, which they are not. Affirmative action deals with access and retention. But educators forget these are only temporary corrective measures installed to provide sufficient time to deal with more deep-rooted issues. Because these legal measures work within narrowly designed hiring, recruitment and retention initiatives, educators continue to rely on structural diversity strategies in the belief that doing more of what worked in the past will eventually solve all the problems in the future. However, the basic assumption about diversity is flawed, and the belief in its efficacy prevents many educators from seeing and understanding the real problems in our institutions.

This unquestioned faith in structural diversity is exemplified in a major longitudinal study done by Bowen and Bok demonstrating that affirmative action actually works for underrepresented students, especially African American undergraduates who attend highly selective Ivy League schools (1998). Their study explains how African American students successfully graduate from these schools in greater proportions than African Americans attending less selective institutions. However, in the analysis they uncover something even more important that they could not explain; a consistent pattern of academic performance gaps (underperformance) between African Americans and majority students of equal socioeconomic status and educational experience. Despite successful graduation rates, the combined GPAs of African Americans ranked them only in the 23rd percentile at graduation, while their majority student cohort with higher GPAs graduated in the 53rd percentile. African American students not only performed below their majority counterparts, they performed below expected levels indicated by their standardized entrance exam scores. The differences were dramatic and could not be attributed to socioeconomic, educational, or even racialized variables (1998, 72–86).

The authors also found factors that tended to reduce these performance gaps. They noted that institutions with diversity programs that included social/cultural elements, such as people-oriented relationships, family engagement, supportive psychological environments, working in groups, and a collaborative learning environment, among others, produce African American graduates with higher GPAs (Ibarra 2001). The authors treated these findings as best practices found on some campuses with effective diversity programs, but they stopped short of recommending that all colleges and universities adopt these as potential solutions for enhancing diversity. That would run counter to their primary argument that affirmative action works, and that institutions need only develop good highly selective recruitment and admissions processes [structural diversity] to achieve success. Strong affirmations like these become unspoken assumptions that reinforce such narrow visions about how diversity works, that it prevents most educators from even contemplating alternative solutions.

The real problem in achieving diversity today is linked to the origins of our institutional culture. Higher education is locked into a centuries-old German research model transplanted from Europe that persists in using one mode of thinking and learning to the exclusion of many others. This ethno-historical merger created one of the best graduate educational systems in the world, but its values and traditions also generates a context for academic culture that turns off many communities of women and underrepresented populations. In fact, the dominance of a particular learning environment with little regard for those whose learning modes are more cognitively and culturally diverse is the basis for the underperformance associated with women and other underrepresented populations in science (Ibarra 2001). According to interviews with Latino/a academics, it is the lack of certain social/cultural elements in the cultural context of many academic cultures that has been a real but hidden problem for increasing diversity and decreasing the performance gap all these years. These are not just cultural differences in learning styles, but for a number of diverse populations, these are profoundly different ways of perceiving and interact-

ing with the world (Ibarra 2001; Nisbett 2003). Our organizations are encountering new kinds of students, faculty, and staff, yet our academic programs do not match the needs of the expanding multicultural society they purport to serve.

Context diversity—Helping the system adjust to people

How do we change organizational culture and climate to meet the needs of changing U.S. demographics? Hankins, Saunders and Situ are attuned to the core issues of diversity, and offer very perceptive ideas about what to do:

> What we need are diversity initiatives that are not about counting the numbers or tokenism but that are concerned with bringing people of diverse backgrounds into the academic community and providing them inclusive space. Inclusive space that involves not only diversifying librarians, the library administration, and staff, but also diversifying the collections, resources, and the ways in which we provide services. What distinguishes these initiatives from residency [structural diversity] programs are the long-term, strategic framing and multilevel elements of these programs. (2003, 2)

Context diversity is a new paradigm that is systemic, inclusive, multidimensional, and changing many academic cultures. It encourages reframing, rather than reforming, academic cultures to meet the needs of all populations and especially underrepresented groups. The basic assumption is that social/cultural elements of higher education are imbalanced or out of synch with the cultural contexts of diverse populations now arriving in greater numbers at our institutions. Rather than recruit and retain populations, context diversity strives to create a learning community replete with myriad ways to *attract* diverse populations and have them *thrive* in an academic or workplace environment. Results are measured not only by how well we attract them, but also by how well we enhance campus cultures to improve upon the academic and work performance for *all* students, faculty, and staff. Rather than strive to increase diversity using just structural or multicultural models, the focus is on finding ways to study, apply and eventually build diversity *into* the higher education system, if you will, *into* the context of our learning communities and beyond.

Within this new paradigm is a model for systemic change, described as multicontextuality (Ibarra 2001). The concept is based on a set of dynamic principles of cultural context and cognition that enhances diversity in many ways, and that can be incorporated, or may even lie dormant until activated, within the fabric of our institutions. The idea is to reframe (expand/shift) pedagogy, curriculum, policies, and rules without giving up sound educational practices, and to include a variety of cultural contexts, such as learning/teaching styles to better serve the needs of diverse populations. When these principles are infused into the current academic culture, the context of higher education (i.e., research and scholarship, business processes, campus climates, etc.) changes into a more inclusive, successful, and attractive environment for all populations involved.

The concept, described in the tables at the end of this paper,[2] is based on research developed by anthropologists and psychologists beginning in the 1960s (Hall 1959, 1966, 1974, 1977, 1984; Ramírez 1991). Originally, Hall's work described people of different national origins around the world. He noted that many cultures, such as Native Americans in the Southwest, Latin Americans, Asians, and African American populations, imprinted their membership in ways of seeing and interpreting the world through a variety of channels of communication (i.e., verbal, non-verbal, interaction, association, etc.). North American women often are associated with these population characteristics as well. All these groups were labeled high context. Other national origin cultures, such as Germany and most Northern European countries, gave greater importance to, but still gathered meaning from, fewer channels of communication emphasizing, for example, words and analytical thinking. They were considered low context groups. The term "low" is not used in a pejorative sense, but rather as a descriptive term that signals fewer elements are needed in those groups to accomplish the same objectives. North American males often are associated with these cultural contexts.

The HC/LC table begins describing these characteristics at the micro or individual level of contextual differences (interaction and association). It continues with some fundamental human conceptualizations of the world (time, space, gender, etc.), and completes the descriptions at a macro level of contextual differ-

ences associated with learning and academic systems. The table is essentially a binary between two distinct points with the midpoint representing a synthesis or multicontextuality. This table can be scaled for use as an organizational or self-assessment tool, as well as a set of guiding principles to help reframe or balance organizational cultures.

Being high or low context is neither good nor bad, the terms simply represent how much context cultural groups and organizations prefer to use to better interpret and interact with the world around them. Academic institutional culture, for instance, is imprinted with predominantly low context characteristics (see table) and consequently, it is out of synch with many populations on campus today. Research among Latino and Latina academics revealed that, although many women and ethnic minority cultures in the U.S. today demonstrate cultural preferences toward high context ways of doing things, they cannot be easily categorized as simply high or low context, they are both, or mixed, tending to perform, interact or associate in various modes as necessary—they are multicontextual in a growing multicontext world (Ibarra 2001).

Context diversity and the academic library

How does context diversity relate to academic libraries? The idea that we live in "a growing multicontext world" may explain how certain influential events changed academic libraries and library culture during the last half of the 20th century. If one were to examine how social/cultural elements improve academic performance found by Bowen and Bok, then associate that with many high and low context elements in the table, and compare both of those with historical developments in academic libraries, one would notice that libraries have adopted interesting patterns of cultural change that appear to be aligned with important historical events in the emergence of context diversity.

Some patterns of cultural change may seem contradictory at first. For instance, library historian Wayne Wiegand views the role of "place" in academic libraries as a cultural arena for fostering community, an important element in context diversity. However, some librarians may interpret "place" as the "user in the life of the library," a traditional perspective that can be closely associated with a low context perception of higher education. That perspective was founded during the late 19th century when American higher education adopted the German research model that turned many college libraries into academic research libraries. Many librarians would agree, that since the 1950s and 1960s, faculty teaching and research agendas have shaped library materials and services at most research universities (W. Wiegand, personal communication, June 11, 2004). Even after the peak growth years of the 1950s and 1960s, "traditional library needs had a strong hold on library construction and renovation" into the 1990s (Bennett 2003, 11). Although traditional approaches to library services and collection space still have their advocates, today, many academic librarians like Carol Botts at UNM, or Ken Frazier, director of libraries at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, are rethinking traditional concepts of time, space, and especially "the library as place (Wiegand 2005)." According to Frazier, "(t) he idea of a library as a place where people collaborate in intellectual work is an idea that was not really articulated by academic librarians in the past," and it did not seem evident in library design either (Wiegand 2005, 59).

Yet the trend toward people-oriented space planning also has its origins in the 1960s and perhaps even earlier.[3] Lushington (2002) suggests that over the last century, all libraries have increasingly opened up to readers in both design and concept. Today, many libraries are open, inviting, ergonomic, and multi-functional structures, containing high-tech, and multimedia access throughout. A scan of the library research reveals an emerging theme of "the library as place" (Martin 2003, 2004, in press; Wiegand 2005). Wiegand recounts that historical change associated with community-oriented libraries also begins in the 1950s and 1960s, and he believes that despite traditional perspectives, libraries have "historically functioned as a cultural agency in the everyday life experiences of ordinary people" (Wiegand 2005, 58). He encourages academic librarians to acknowledge the historical influence of diverse publics and to accommodate a "library in the life of a user" as well as "a user in the life of the library" perspective (W. Wiegand, personal communication, June 11, 2004).

A Prototype for context diversity

How can these two opposing worldviews coexist in academic library culture over so many years? One answer is that academic libraries still predominantly reflect low context culture by catering and holding on to tradition-bound academic cultures. But this is only

partially true, because unlike traditional disciplinary cultures, libraries have made dramatic changes and turnarounds to accommodate different populations over the years. According to Gary Strong (2004), public libraries in the Queens, New York area have been creating partnerships with local ethnic communities for quite some time, and librarians are still reshaping them to serve a variety of specific ethnic/cultural needs. Because they are more naturally community-oriented and customer-based, public libraries began changing to accommodate their different publics about twenty-five years ago (R. S. Martin, personal communication, July 1, 2004).

Academic libraries may have responded in similar, but more subtle, ways to population changes over time. Although higher education and associated libraries in the U.S. were originally designed primarily for 19th century elite White males, the GI Bill at the end of WWII opened the flood gates for admitting a variety of service men from previously excluded socio-economic classes, ethnicities, and religious backgrounds. The 1960s civil rights legislation opened the doors even further for women and eventually a variety of underrepresented populations. Despite the changing demographics and affirmative action laws, population increases were gradual and below a critical mass that could generate significant changes in academic culture. This is partly due to the fact that structural diversity initiatives are not designed for systemic culture change, and partly due to an era in which diverse populations of the first generations in college sought to fit in rather than change the system. It was during the late 1980s that populations such as Latinos/as entered academe with fewer inclinations to adapt to academic cultural norms (Ibarra 2001).

There is another explanation for the co-existence of tradition-bound and user-friendly academic library cultures: they are evolving Multicontextual characteristics. By definition, a multicontextual diversity model is inclusive of all cultural contexts. It is the balance or the process of balancing cultural contexts that is important. Academic libraries could have been unconsciously and indirectly responding to changing demographics that began in earnest during the 1950s and 1960s with the influx of more high context women and minorities. If academic libraries are largely voluntary by nature and tend to mirror key features of change on our campus, then it is likely that the attempts to serve faculty needs included helping the growing number of high context students who were clearly in conflict with the dominant low context culture of academe. Academic libraries like public libraries attempted to address the needs of all of their publics because that appears to be an inherent dynamic of library culture. That it did not happen prior to the 1950s is due to the lack of a critical mass of high context populations on campus.

If context diversity is predicated on balance, we should understand how traditional and nontraditional elements of cultural context coexist successfully. From a recent survey of library designs and construction during the 1990s, Bennett (2003) concludes that libraries have responded to physically integrating space for information technology by creating more electronic classrooms or "information commons" and emphasizing information literacy. While it may be true that these changes actually support the goals of traditional academic culture, other less visible, but no less dramatic, improvements helped reframe the context of library culture within.

For example, the turnabout in restrictive library rules appears to emerge during the 1980s and 1990s. During that era a business model introducing a team-based customer-oriented approach often called Total Quality Management (TQM) or Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) had an impact on many library systems and cultures. Fran Wilkinson, Associate Dean at the UNM libraries, recalls how the training fostered a new perspective on both internal and external customers. "Our customers began changing expectations and we started treating each other better too (personal communication, December 15,2004)." Consequently, many librarians began questioning their own rules. Why continue to enforce restrictions on food and drinks or nontraditional social activity that tend to drive library customers away and turn staff into library police? Customers broke the rules anyway so why not recognize and accommodate their needs. How does she account for these changes? "Libraries are businesses and we have to succeed as businesses…yet people are drawn to this new and changing environment." Fran, like many others I talked too, is attracted to library culture today because it tries to accommodate all kinds of users.

A pattern of low context library designs coexisting with high context library cultures represents one of many working examples of a basic multicontextual

diversity model. The subtle ways academic libraries change beginning in the 1960s also suggests they may be one of the first traditional campus institutions to respond to demographic shifts accommodating high and low context cultures and developing a prototype for context diversity. The breakthrough is recognizing that libraries are really customer-driven businesses that simultaneously cater to a traditional world of low context academic cultures within a world of increasingly high context populations.

The changing library landscape

The advent of computers and Internet driven technology associated with the information revolution are obvious changes in academic libraries today. From a perspective of context or multicontext diversity however, the more interesting changes are how users reshaped library space and planning over time. For instance, academic libraries during the 1990s began changing open spaces, such as lobbies, into other social purposes, such as cafes for food and socializing, specially designed meeting rooms for Internet telecommunications, group study space, or lounges and so on (Bennett 2003). Bennett's survey of library construction discovered that academic libraries had to retrofit their completed designs when they realized there was a pattern of "extreme growth of group study" and a preference among users today toward working in teams (2003, 17). Despite renovations, many found their libraries outmoded and no longer as attractive to users as in the past. Over the last twenty years both students and faculty were no longer using libraries in traditional ways for individualized study (low context elements of interaction and association), but instead preferred collaborative (high context) working and studying space.

After major renovations were completed at the Dickenson College library in Carlisle Pennsylvania, librarians found they did not have enough group study rooms, so they began removing open space collections and revamping alcoves to create additional group study environments. They even had to lower or remove privacy walls (low context elements of territoriality) from their computer clusters to begin attracting student users who they found preferred to use Internet technology while working interactively with others (high context elements of territoriality, interaction, and association).[4] Johannes van Reenen, director of the Science and Engineering library at UNM, notes that many populations of engineering students are becoming increasingly electronically based library users with interesting study habits. Not only do they work in teams, they also form study groups integrating that activity with wireless laptops connected to the Internet. They create virtual study rooms while physically clustered together in the open library spaces. He has seen them communicate and interact with each other using words and computers at the same time, and suspects they also interact in real time with colleagues at remote locations (J. Reenen, personal communication, June 11, 2004).

The millennium generation and multicontext users

Johannes recalls that many user groups he observes are international students, primarily Asians, and believes that other library groups observed tend to be individuals from various ethnic or cultural backgrounds. His observation seems to be supported by Kuh and Gonyea's study of library use among undergraduate students (2004). Their data, drawn from more than 30,000 students between 1984 and 2002, examined the role of academic libraries in promoting student engagement in learning. They explored a series of specific questions asking if students used the library as a quiet place to study, found something interesting while browsing, asked a librarian or staff member for assistance, used indexes or databases, wrote papers or bibliographies there, returned to read basic references or documents, and made judgments about the quality of information found. Analyzing their data by sex, class, race, and institutional type, they found that underrepresented groups frequent academic libraries more often than other groups and, based on the frequency of student responses, "the library appears to be a positive learning environment for all students, especially members of historically underrepresented groups" (2004, 11). They speculate that students of color may perceive academic libraries as "safe havens" that nurture and support "academic success in collaboration with peers of the same racial and ethnic background, much in the same way the campus union provides a venue for social gatherings." (2004, 10) Their research suggests that ethnicity and perhaps cultural context may be important factors for understanding library users and how they generate change.

However, it is unclear from their research how these diverse groups actually use the academic library

as a social venue compared to other populations. According to library historians and researchers this lack of knowledge among librarians seems to be a common problem. Some lament that librarians still do not really know how teachers teach and students learn or how that impacts library design and usage. And, if they do, they are not applying their knowledge effectively (Bennett 2003; Martin 2004; Wiegand 2004, 2005). Fortunately, there is information from cultural studies and workplace consultants that offer some clues about student behaviors that reflect on library culture as well. We often tag generations with popularized terms that describe some common behavioral characteristics associated with important historical events (i.e., Baby Boomers, Echo Boomers, Generation X, etc.). Generation X students are shaped by events in the 1970s, and the newest group, called the "Millennial Generation," were born after 1982 and exhibit different characteristics than Gen-X students (Oblinger 2003, 38). To the following list of Millennial Generation characteristics described by Oblinger (2003, 38), I include probable associations with dimensions of diversity and high or low cultural contexts:

- They gravitate toward group activity; (HC—gender culture)
- They identify with their parents' values and feel close to their parents; (HC—association)
- They spend more time doing homework and housework and less time watching TV; (LC)
- They believe "it's cool to be smart";
- They are fascinated by new technologies;
- They are racially and ethnically diverse; (multicultural diversity); and
- They often (one in five) have at least one immigrant parent (multicultural diversity).

In addition to differences in attitudes, Millennials exhibit distinct learning styles. For example, they are inclusive of others and prefer to work in teams (HC); they are civic-minded, community-oriented experiential learners (HC—territoriality and learning); and they excel in multitasking within a collaborative working style (HC) (Raines 2002; Oblinger 2003). These characteristics are attributed to a number of important influences, such as parenting and parent advocacy, living highly structured lives, increasing multiculturalism, globalism as a part of life, and a lifetime experience with advanced computer/Internet technology (Raines 2002). Apparently, the Millennial Generation could have a direct influence in changing library culture and design. However, the most prevalent characteristics—being community-oriented, civic minded, closely bonded to parent/family, adhering to multicultural perspectives, being ethnically diverse, and with some, direct immigrant origins—all have their genesis within multicontextual populations associated with context diversity.

As mentioned earlier, multicontextuality also explains how the composite of peoples' experiences throughout their lives affects their experiences and performances in higher education and beyond. It is framed around the idea that people have been imprinted from birth to maturity by the kinds of learning communities they experience (e.g., family, home, community, elementary school, middle school, high school, etc.). They differ significantly from each other and from the kinds of experiences that are used to successfully prepare them for the homogeneous university systems of the past. Consequently, our colleges and universities in general are out of synch with many students and faculty members entering higher education today. Multicontextual populations have their origins in gendered experiences or within ethnic populations that first entered academe around the end of WWII and in greater numbers during the 1960s. They learned and adopted characteristics of both high and low cultural contexts as an academic survival strategy.

Noting the timing of historical events and the similarity of cultural context principles compared with Millennial characteristics, the Millennial Generation is very likely the offspring of the Baby Boomers or the 1960s first generation in college and may actually include the increasing number of multicontextual populations we now encounter in higher education (i.e., women, Hispanics, Asian Americans, African Americans, etc.), and that I describe in research elsewhere (Ibarra 1996, 2001). Without good data for disaggregating the Millennial Generation into specific ethnic and gender subgroups, one could argue that it is difficult to determine if they are the same groups, or if the subgroups are of significant size within the Millennial Generation, to influence or be influenced by the behavioral characteristics of multicontextual populations.

Although this analysis is helpful, it may not be necessary. One of the tenants of multicontextuality is that in general, various self-identified groups may

tend to exhibit certain cultural context preferences. For example, it would be safe to say that Native American cultures in general tend to exhibit high context cultural preferences. But individuals that self-identify within those groups may not easily be associated with those same preferences. By definition, multicontextual means that one is capable of learning and using both cultural contexts appropriately (i.e., LC modes for study or work, HC modes for family and community). Therefore, it would inaccurate to assume that a particular women or a particular Native American male is either high context or low context by virtue of their gender or ethnicity.

If this is true, there are a number of additional elements defining this new diversity paradigm. First, populations of majority males are high context as well, and thus equally affected by low context academic culture. Our current research suggests this is a hidden dynamic among large groups of standardized test takers (Cohen and Ibarra 2005).[5] Millennial generations need not include large populations of women or ethnic groups to be identified with high context principles, for it seems that high context characteristics are relevant for all kinds of new generation groups. Context diversity is an inclusive paradigm, and when multicontextual principles are applied, everyone benefits, especially underrepresented populations that have been chronically affected by academic underperformance issues in the past. Finally, context diversity is not an "us-vs.-them" model, as may be the case with structural and multicultural diversity models. My point is that multicontextual and Millennial populations are so extraordinarily similar, their behavioral characteristics support the proposition that a critical mass of high context populations are, indeed, influencing academic libraries, and may have been doing so for quite some time.

An overview of academic libraries and context diversity

In summary, academic libraries in the U.S. have created a prototype for context diversity whether they are aware of it or not. This conclusion is drawn from historical, social and cultural developments that influenced library culture and construction over the last half of the 20th century. Prior to WWII, academic libraries in the U.S. catered to and were designed for a traditional academic (low context) culture shaped predominantly by elite White males. Two important events changed that demographic picture forever. WWII created the first GI Bill that opened doors to higher education for people from previously excluded ethnic and religions groups. The 1960s civil rights era opened them further for racially discriminated populations and encouraged women to enter higher education in greater numbers. These events allowed access for more and more generations of high context populations who did not directly impact library cultures until the late 1980s and 1990s. Although these populations had relatively little influence on entrenched academic cultures, they began to influence academic library culture in part because academic libraries had become more responsive to their publics since the 1960s, and in part because innovative business models during the 1990s fostered greater responsiveness toward library users.

Innovative influences, such as the quality improvement movements encouraging better customer-oriented service, the rise of successful and competitive bookstore/coffeehouses, and shifting student demographics, were some of many factors contributing to the gradual altering of academic library culture. Librarians became focused on students and their own staff as customers, creating conditions that accommodated diverse cultural contexts and encouraged a reevaluation of restrictive library rules and policies. Despite the maintenance of traditional low context academic culture in library renovations and expansions, during the 1990s some librarians retrofitted space to accommodate a new generation of high context student users who were more collaborative, community and people-oriented, preferred studying in groups or working in teams and used advanced technology easily.

Those early adopters reframed their library space and cultures to create new learning environments with technology driven information centers, which today attract new generations of diverse students who engage in library services more often than other populations, apparently because it helps them thrive both academically and socially. Some researchers and historians may question how the traditional role of the academic library fits in with the more contemporary role of the library as a social agency—"a place to belong." Before anyone attempts reform, academic librarians should consider how the coexistence of these opposing factions establishes a prototype for context diversity, a multicontextual model that is by definition inclusive of all teaching, research, and learning styles. Cultural

and historical dynamics have allowed academic library culture in the U.S. to advance to a position that is ahead of most traditional campus academic units. Many disciplines and academic programs have yet to recognize the impact of shifting demographics, and may even resist the resulting changes now occurring on our campuses today.

A new design framework for the future

Although academic librarians have made progress in meeting the needs of various constituencies, it has been accomplished so far without recognizing the new paradigm emerging. This is clear in a recent comment by a librarian who states, "(w)hen we were building libraries 25 or 30 years ago, there was a paradigm. It's not clear that there is a paradigm anymore" (Carlson 2005, A33). The paradigm he refers to still exists. The lack of clarity does not mean it is gone, only that it is shifting or trying to coexist with an emerging new one. Context diversity has had an impact on library design and culture. The concern is how these changes will continue in the future. In most cases, when new ideas arise we tend to reform organizational behaviors with an out-with-the-old-in-with-the-new mind set. But this approach excludes ideas that can inadvertently eliminate good institutional practices in the process. The goal in context diversity is to create a balance of cultural contexts, which in academe currently leans toward the low context side of the chart. If done consciously, a process for adopting context diversity or a multicontextual model should try to reframe the best of both old and new components while striving for inclusiveness.

The following are ideas and concepts for librarians to consider if they choose to consciously adopt this new design framework:

1. Academic librarians should first reaffirm the importance of structural and multicultural diversity initiatives in their institutions. Despite their limitations, structural and multicultural diversity initiatives are as important today as in the past. Diversity in any dimension cannot stand by itself or even in pairs. If context diversity is to thrive and succeed, it needs strong affirmative hiring initiatives and infusion of multicultural elements in the institution. The new diversity paradigm suggests that none of the three dimensions can succeed today without the support of the others. If these are not well developed, that should be one of the first objectives for creating an effective context diversity model in the institution.

2. Librarians should develop presentations and workshops explaining to students, faculty, and staff how the principles of cultural context work. This is an initial step that helps people envision how to apply the principles (outlined in the HC/LC table) and how they may be applied to future library construction, space planning, and cultural improvements. Librarians should keep in mind that the principles involved are to help strike a contextual balance. The table is meant to help librarians and their staffs reframe their cultures for inclusiveness not reform them for exclusiveness.

3. Librarians should institutionalize both quantitative and qualitative methods to learn how faculty students and staff use their libraries. Customer surveys are important sources of information, if the right questions are being asked. But important information is lost if there are no ethnographic methods used to learn about library customers. At the UNM libraries, Carol Botts recalls how the Fine Arts library became the first one on campus to create a specific place for certain student users. She observed how music majors are in general very group oriented compared to other users distinguished by major. Music majors tend to use the library more than others and quite often as a place to do group projects. Her observations and the earlier observations about students studying in the UNM Science and Engineering library, reinforce the point that cultural context is embedded in the nature of some academic disciplines as well. Music, for instance, requires both individual and group-oriented professional skills that are mentally and physically demanding, as are other humanities disciplines, such as dance or sometimes art. While these disciplines have appropriate spaces for practice and performance, the library is also an important learning environment where learning patterns of cultural context and cognition are clearly contrasted with traditional library culture (i.e., the German research model designed strictly for individualized study). The glaring conflict between the library as a place for individualized quiet study and the need for a place that allows noisy group study ("library in the life of the user") is what Carol observes among music majors. Successful musicians depend upon learning life-long skills that are multicontextual, and that come out in the living/learning process. In fact, it was noticing how music majors used the library that

encouraged Carol and others to create a place for them to belong.

4. Librarians should try to incorporate context diversity or adopt multicontextual principles in library design and construction. I tend to agree with Bennett's concern that academic librarians constructed buildings in the 1990s with little regard as to how their faculty users taught or their students learned (2003). But unlike most faculty in academic departments, librarians may be paying more attention to the learning and cognitive styles of users in their designs. Clearly, many librarians are more aware of how behavioral characteristics of students have changed dramatically over the last few decades and how that influences space planning. Nelson, for example, tells us that students want health sciences libraries open 24/7 for study and online access, especially if this type of space is not available elsewhere on campus (2003). She confirms how science libraries need more group study space to accommodate learning styles, yet notes that individual study spaces remain important. She also describes how to accommodate noisy and quiet spaces as well as natural light for study areas. Her examples strive for a balance of diverse learning styles, as Bennett (2003) suggests, but they still lack cultural context elements that could improve upon her recommended designs even more.

5. Library planning should combine place and space to design beyond cognitive learning styles. Context diversity encourages one to think broadly and inclusively. If the so-called Millennials are multicontextual students using libraries for social as well as academic purposes, then it would be better to think of libraries as living/learning communities. Adopting designs for cognitive learning styles is a good place to start. But even that may be a limited concept for reallocating library space if it is the only variable in a design. Besides incorporating various learning styles, one might consider designing for "families" as a conceptual theme. There are strong indications that this could be an important contextual trend. For instance, Millennials are noted for their unusually close ties to parents and families, as are Hispanic/Latinos, Native Americans, and other high context populations. Even nontraditional students at UNM have formed associations that resemble families to support each other because neither the campus nor the surrounding urban communities provide the infrastructures to sustain their needs (Uyttebrouck 2005). Incorporating a family-oriented concept does not mean transforming libraries into childcare facilities, it means learning from family-oriented users what community-oriented library services would attract them and help them achieve academic success.

Should libraries begin reframing their space and place to incorporate these new concepts of living and learning? The question is one of many under consideration at the Zimmerman Library on the University of New Mexico campus. UNM librarians plan to include more multicontextual concepts in the design of their next space-planning project. They will consider the fact that many of its users are Hispanic, nontraditional and high context, and that it is located in a metro-area where academic study is simply another variable with work and family life. The main library building currently epitomizes a multicultural design incorporating Pueblo/Mission (Spanish/Pueblo Indian) style architecture throughout its interior and exterior structures. Librarians plan to create a Research Plaza rather than an information commons, which fits better with the cultural traditions of public open space found commonly among communities created by Spanish colonists in New Mexico during the 1500s (Low 2000). The cathedral-like West Wing reading room will be revamped to reflect multicontextual uses without losing the impact of its famed multicultural architecture. The project will be a first of its kind to combine context diversity with space planning.

This paper is only a brief anthropological venture into the world of library science that included talking with librarians and exploring their literature. It became a hunt for answers to explain why so many academic libraries changed their cultural ways over the last half century. One finds dramatic changes that abolish centuries old library rules, and there are other less dramatic ones revealing libraries as special places to belong. From an insiders perspective these may be no more than epidermal transformations in a timeless world of academe. But for an outsider, these symbolize evolutionary change in a world noted for its loyalty to traditional academic ways. This evolutionary shift is captured in historical renovations through which academic libraries overcame their past and unknowingly developed a prototype for attracting diverse populations for the future. The prototype is a dynamic multicontextual design that became apparent to me in the late

1990s. Although few academics recognize what these dynamics are or how they work, examples of them are being adopted, albeit unconsciously, in a handful of academic programs and departments throughout the country (Ibarra 2001). In fact, at least one online university fashioned after that multicontextual design is successfully attracting diverse graduate student groups and teaching them to thrive rather than merely survive their experience (Ibarra 1999).

Current research is uncovering even more examples of multicontextual programs on traditional campuses, and the data collected demonstrate the paradigm exists. It is palpable and success is measurable. When applied, context diversity is effective for increasing structural diversity as well as reducing academic underperformance among those chronically disaffected by low context learning environments (Ibarra 2004). When academics in these programs discuss their strategies for success, several characteristics tend to stand out; each program or faculty member involved is entrepreneurial in spirit, reflective and sensitive to their constituencies, and often takes risks to break away from cultural norms. Whether they acknowledge it or not, academic librarians may be made of the same stuff. That is what I suspected when I began exploring the new user-friendly campus library. My biggest surprise is the discovery that academic libraries evolved toward these dynamic principles much earlier than expected. But these details need further study, for the evidence described here marks only a preliminary trail. It is now up to scholars and library cultural historians to determine whether or not academic libraries are at the forefront of context diversity and are leading the way in helping design and transform higher education for the 21st century.

Notes

1. I wish to thank the following people for contributing their insights for this paper: from the University of New Mexico Library—Camila A. Alire, Carol Botts, Mina Jane Grothey, David Herzel, Johannes van Reenen, and Fran Wilkinson, who also read an earlier draft of the paper. Robert S. Martin—the Institute of Museum and Library Services, Washington, D.C.; from the Dickenson College Library—Julie McPhail, Director, Library and Academic Technology services, Robert E. Renaud, Vice President and CIO, Library and Information Services; and William Welburn, Associate Professor in the School of Information Resources and Library Science, the University of Arizona. I especially want to thank Wayne Wiegand, F. William Summers Professor of Library and Information Studies and Professor of American Studies at Florida State University, who not only read an earlier draft of the paper but also helped frame some of the ideas developed here.

2. Modified from Ibarra, 2001, Table 3.1, 69–76.

3. William Welburn suggests that the 1965 study by Metcalf, *Planning Academic and Research Library Buildings*, had a great influence on how librarians today include both internal and external customers in space planning for libraries. Such trends for space planning could have begun even earlier. Personal communication, January 12, 2005.

4. Personal observations and communication with Julie McPhail, Library Director, Dickenson College, Carlisle, Penn., October 25, 2004.

5. Test developer and research colleague, Allan S. Cohen, now at the University of Georgia, is finding that the pattern of differential item functioning or DIF found among large populations taking standardized tests is better understood as a pattern of error responses associated with latent subgroups of high context test takers of all kinds, rather than what is commonly assumed to be just women or ethnic minorities who tend not to perform well on standardized tests compared to majority males. He suggests that HC majority males taking standardized tests, and there may be many more of them than we first thought, also are negatively impacted by such low context testing instruments.

References

Alire, Camila A. 2001. "The New Beginnings Program: A Retention Program for Junior Faculty of Color." *Journal of Library Administration*, Vol.33, No. 1 and 2.

Alire, Camila A., and Frederick J. Stielow. 1995. "Minorities and the Symbolic Potential of the Academic Library: Reinventing Tradition." *College and Research Libraries*, (56) November: 509–17.

Bennett, Scott. 2003. Libraries Designed for Learning. *Council on Library and Information Resources*. Washington, D.C. Retrieved 1/4/05 http://www.clir.org/pubs/abstract/pub122abst.html.

Bowen, William G., and Derek Bok, 1998. *The Shape of the River: Long-Term Consequences of Considering Race in college and University Admissions*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Carlson, Scott. 2005. "Library Construction Focuses More on Books Than on Technology, Study Finds." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Information Technology,

Vol. 50, Issue 17, page A33. Retrieved 1/4/05 http://chronicle.com/weekly/v50/il7/17a03301.htm.

Cohen, Allan S., and Robert A. Ibarra. 2005. "Examining Gender-Related Differential Item Functioning using Insights from Psychometric and Multicontext Theory." In Ann M. Gallagher and James C. Kaufman, eds. *Mind the Gap: Gender Differences in Mathematics*. Chapter 7, Section 3: 353–420, Cambridge University Press.

Hall, Edward T. 1959. *The Silent Language*. Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications.

———. 1966. *The Hidden Dimension*. 2nd ed., Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books.

———. 1974. *Handbook for Proxemic Research*, Society for the Anthropology of Visual Communication, Washington, D.C.

———. 1977. *Beyond Culture*. 2nd edition. Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books.

———. 1984. *The Dance of Life: The Other Dimension of Time*, 2nd ed. Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press/Doubleday Books.

Hankins, Rebecca; Saunders, Michele, & Situ, Ping. 2003. "Diversity initiatives vs. residency programs: Agents of change?" *Campus & Research Library News*, May, Vol. 64 No. 5: 1. Retrieved 1/7/05 http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlpubs/crlnews/backissues2003/may3/diversity-initiatives.htm.

Ibarra, Robert A. 1996. *Latino Experiences in Graduate Education: Implications for Change*. Monograph VII Enhancing the Minority Presence in Graduate Education VII, 75. Washington, D.C.: The Council of Graduate Schools.

———. 1999. "Studying Latinos in a 'Virtual' University: Reframing Diversity and Academic Culture Change." Julian Samora Research Institute, Occasional Paper, No. 48, October, proceedings from *Latinos, the Internet, and the Telecommunication Revolution*, East Lansing, Mich.: Julian Samora Research Institute. Retrieved http://www.jsri.msu.edu/RandS/Research/ops/oc68abs.html.

———. 2001. *Beyond Affirmative Action: Reframing the Context of Higher Education.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

———. 2003. *Creating an American Research University for the 21st Century: Multicontextuality and Higher Education.* A research project funded by the Ford Foundation; Higher Education, Knowledge and Religion Section. Retrieved http://www.unm.edu/~isrnet/ford/index.htm.

———. 2004. "The World of Multicontextuality and Diversity." An invited paper for a national symposium, *Multicontextuality, Unity and Diversity in a Pluralistic Society,* hosted by the University of New Mexico Office of Diversity and funded by the UNM Ford Foundation research project, September 17–19, 2004, La Posada Hotel, Albuquerque N.M.. Retrieved 2/22/05 http://www.unm.edu/~isrnet/ford/index.htm.

Jones, DeEtta. 2000. "Diversity: Where We Are and Where We Came From." *Leading Ideas* No. 15, July. The Association for Research Libraries. Retrieved 6/23/04 http://www.arl.org/diversity/leading/issue15/.

Kuh, George D., and Robert M. Gonyea. 2004. "The Role of the Academic Library in Promoting Student Engagement in Learning." A paper presented to the 11th National Conference of the Association of College and Research Libraries. Retrieved 6/10/04 http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlevents/nationalconference/03authorindex.htm.

Low, Setha M. 2000. *On the Plaza: The Politics of Public Space and Culture.* Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Press.

Lushington, Nolan. 2002. *Libraries Designed for Users: A 21st Century Guide*. New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers.

Martin, Robert S. 2003. "Reaching across Library Boundaries." *Council on Library and Information Resources*, Emerging Visions for Access in the Twenty-first Century Library. Retrieved 7/1/04 http://www.clir.org/pubs/reports/pubs119/martin.html.

———. 2004. "Libraries and Librarians in the 21st Century: Fostering a Learning Society." *C&RL News*, December, Vol. 65, No 11. Retrieved 7/1/04 http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlpubs/crlnews/backissues2004/december04/librariesin21.

———. (ND). "Libraries and Learning." *Advances in Librarianship*, Vol. 28, (in press).

Metcalf, Keyes DeWitt. 1965. *Planning Academic and Research Library Buildings,* New York: McGraw Hill.

Nelson, Patricia P. 2003. "Current Issues in the Design of Academic Health Sciences Libraries: Findings from Three Recent Facility Projects." *Journal of the Medical Library Association*. July; 91(3): 347–51.

Nisbett, Richard E. 2003 *The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently… and Why*. New York: Free Press.

Oblinger, Diana. 2003. "Boomers, Gen-Xers & Millennials: Understanding the New Students." *EDUCAUSE Review*, July/August: 37–47.

Raines, Claire. 2002. "Managing Millennials." Generations at Work: The Online Home of Claire Raines Associates. Retrieved 6/23/04 http://www.genereationsatwork.

com/articles/millenials.htm, on 6/23/04.

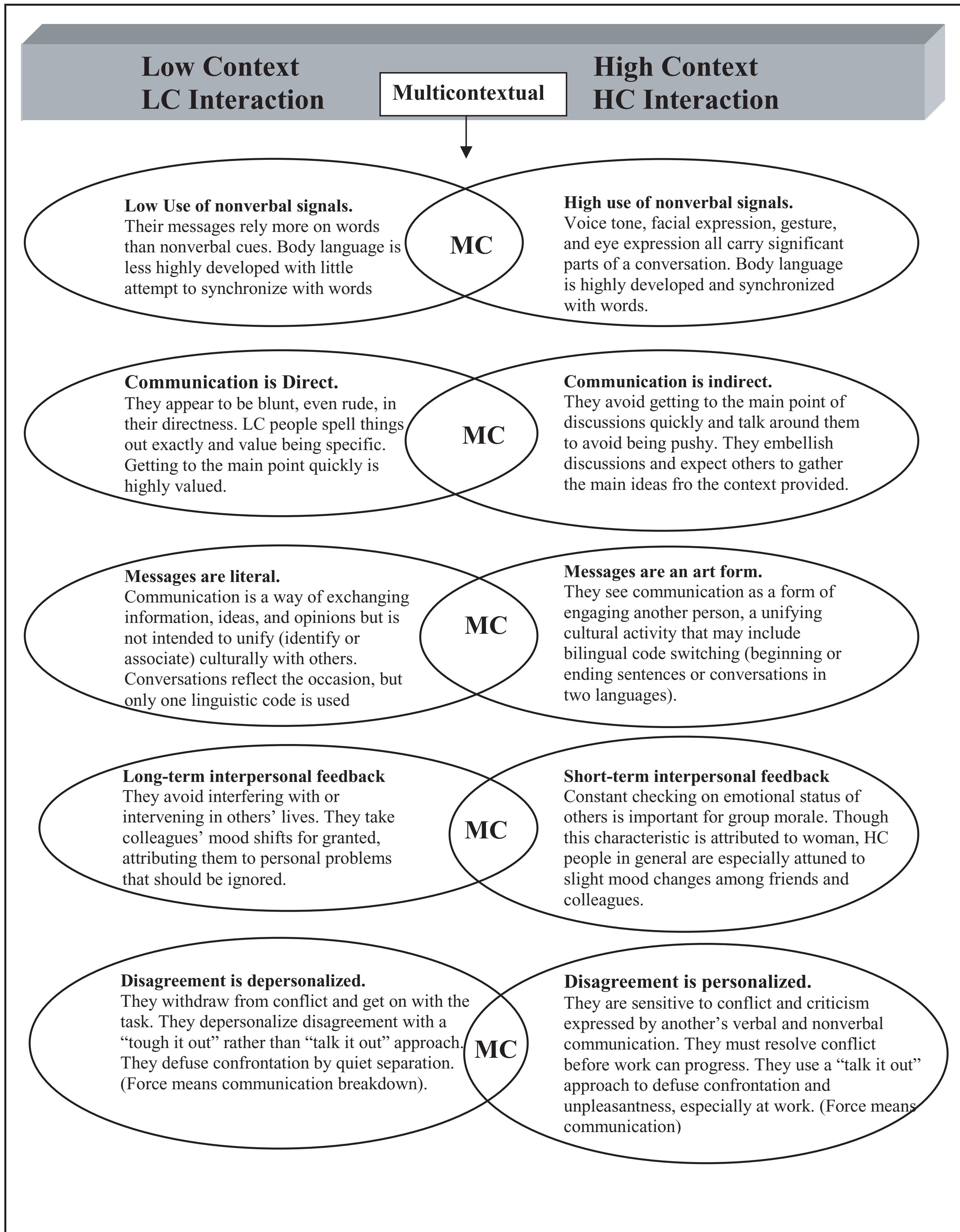
Ramírez III, Manuel. 1991. *Psychotherapy and Counseling with Minorities: A Cognitive Approach to Individual and Cultural Differences*, New York: Pergamon Press.

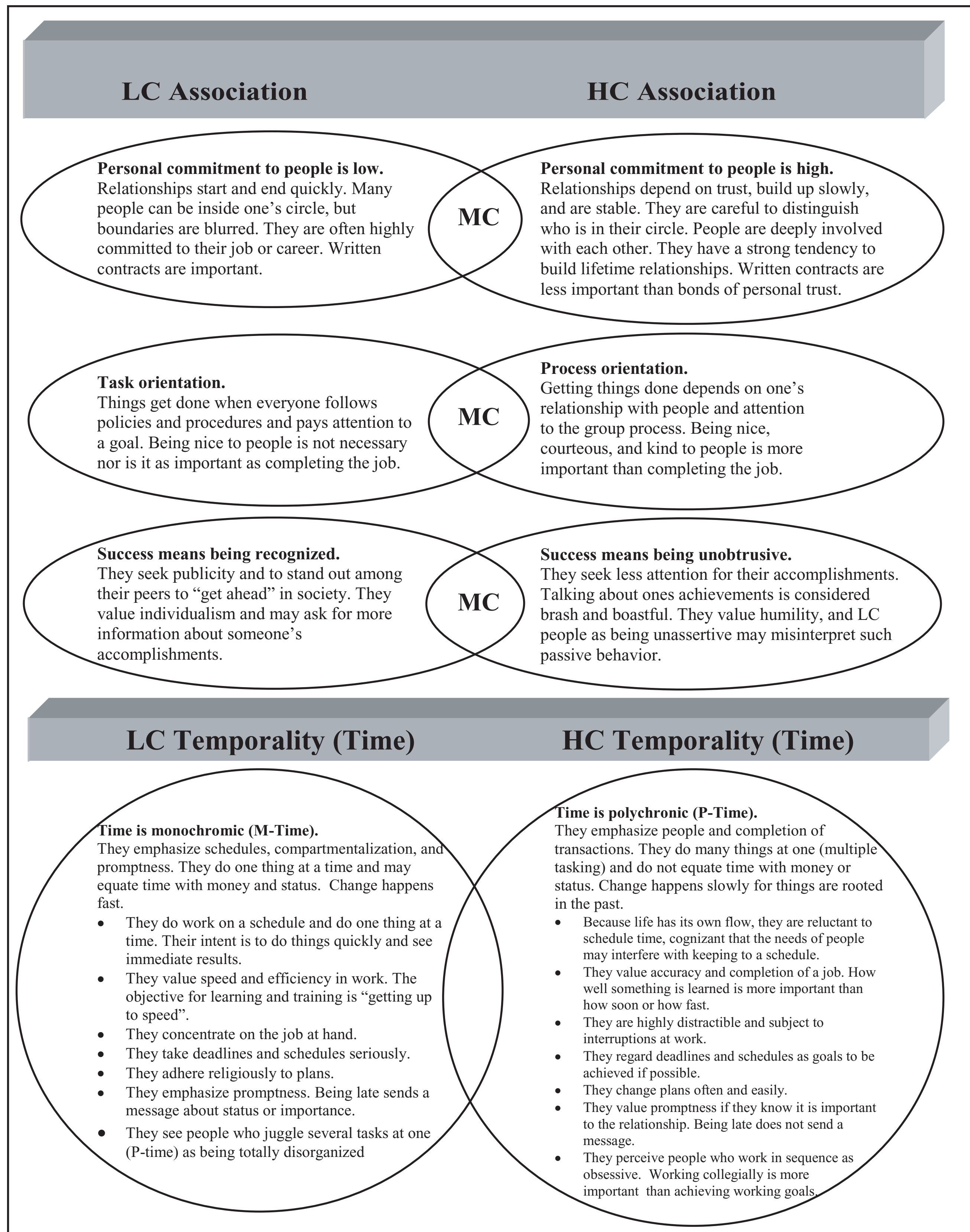
Simmons-Welburn, Janice. 2000. "Rating Library and Institutional Priorities in Managing Diversity: Results of a Preliminary Study" *Leading Ideas*, March, No. 13, Association of Research Libraries. Retrieved 1/5/05 http://www.arl.org/diversity/leading/issue13/simwel.html, on 1/5/05.

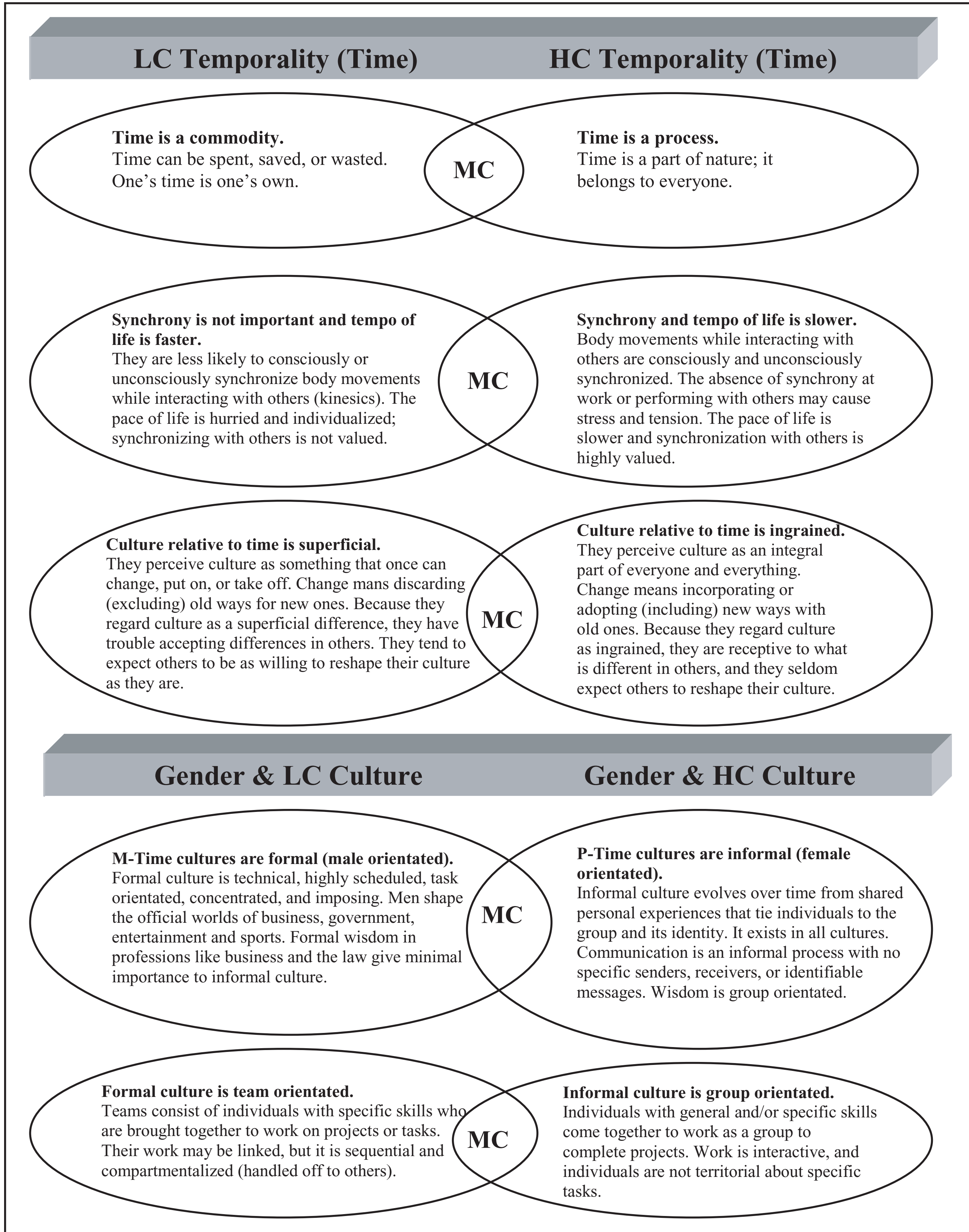
Strong, Gary E. 2004. "Libraries Empower People to Participate in a Civil Society." *Council on Library and Information Resources*, Emerging Visions for Access in the Twenty-first Century Library. Retrieved 7/1/04 http://www.clir.org/pubs/reports/pubs119/strong.html.

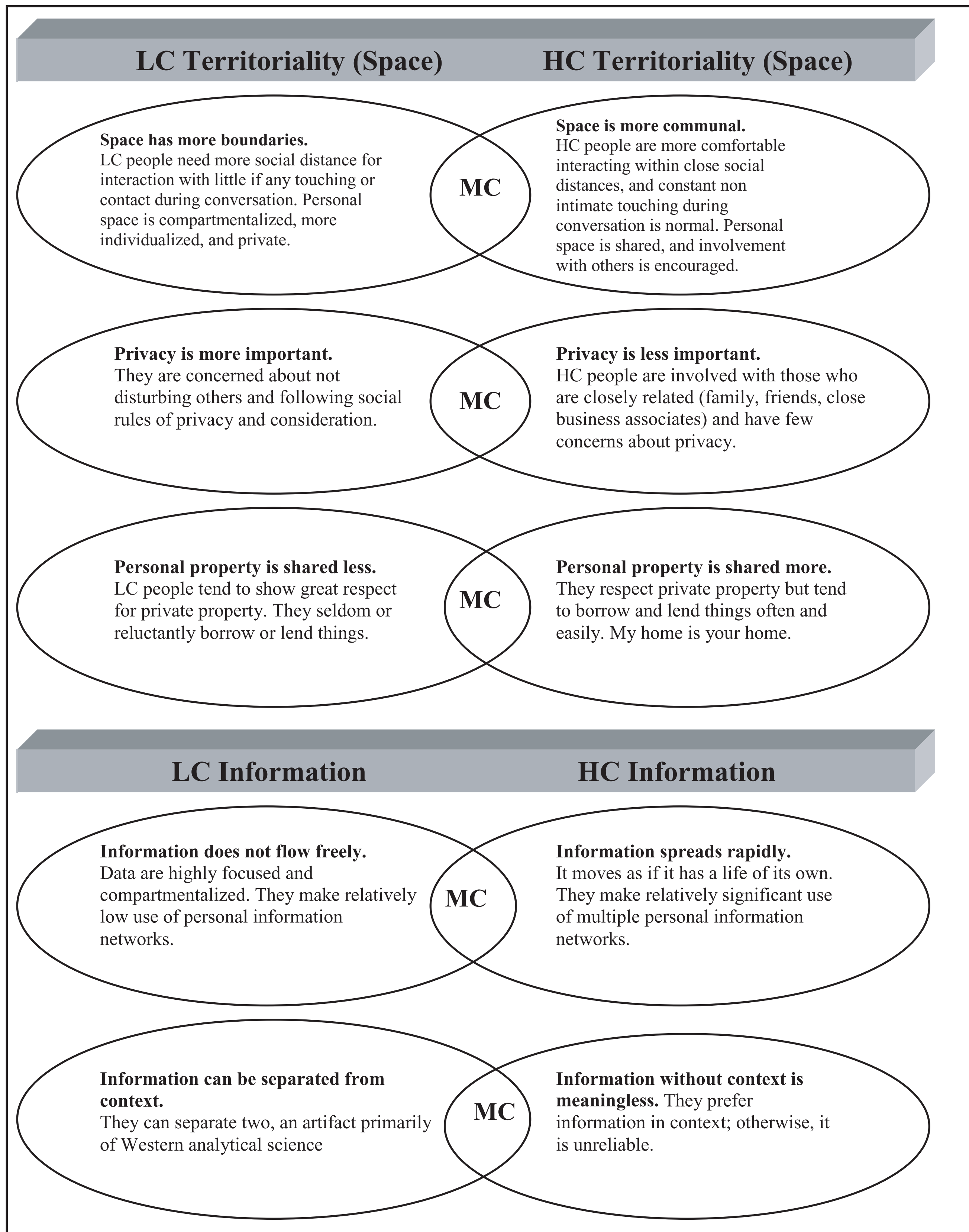
Uyttebrouck, Oliver. 2005. "Home Sweet Homework." *Albuquerque Journal*, Section D: D1, Tuesday, February 8, 2005.

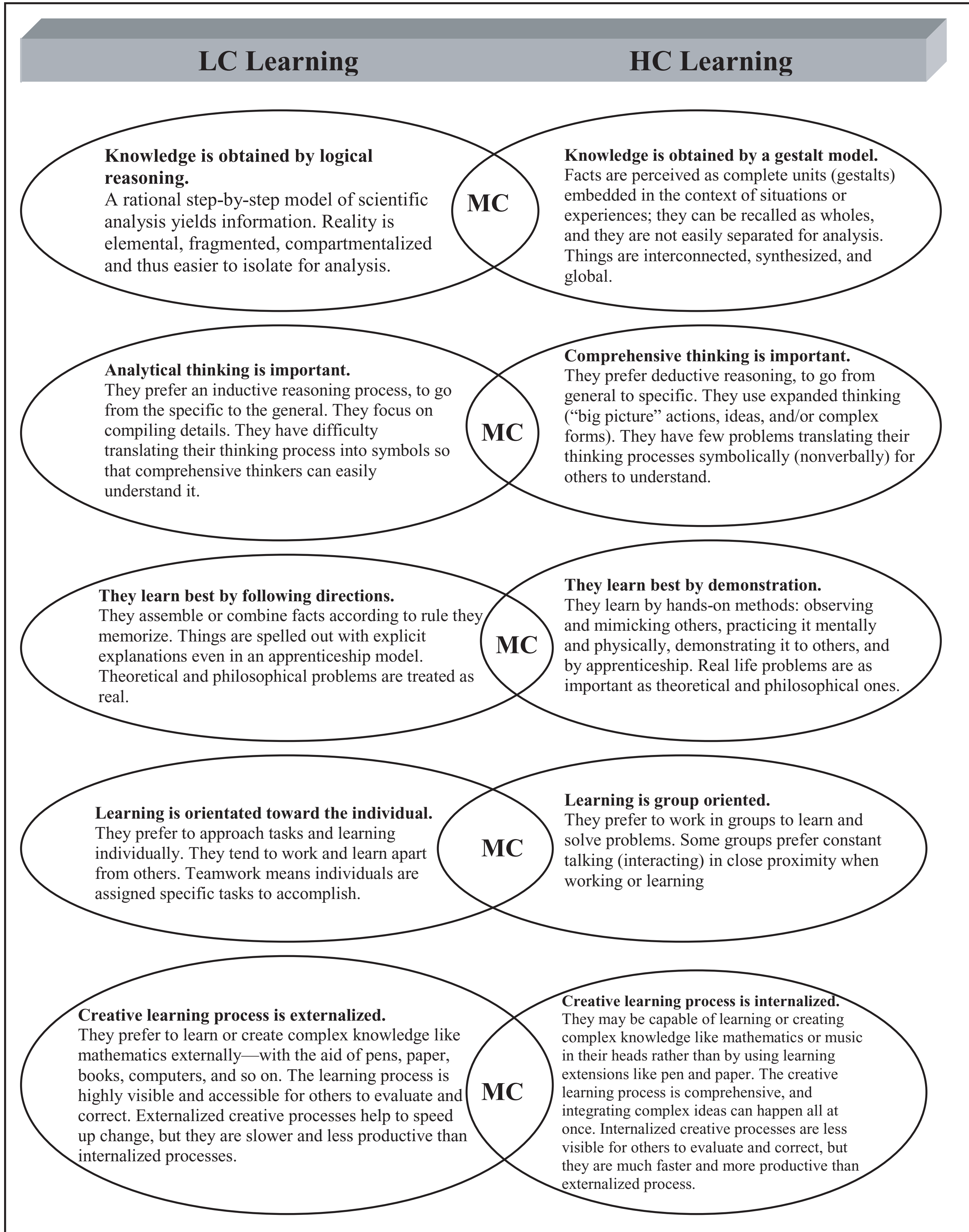
Wiegand, Wayne A. 2005. "Critiquing the Curriculum," *American Libraries*, Vol. 36, January; 1: 58–60.

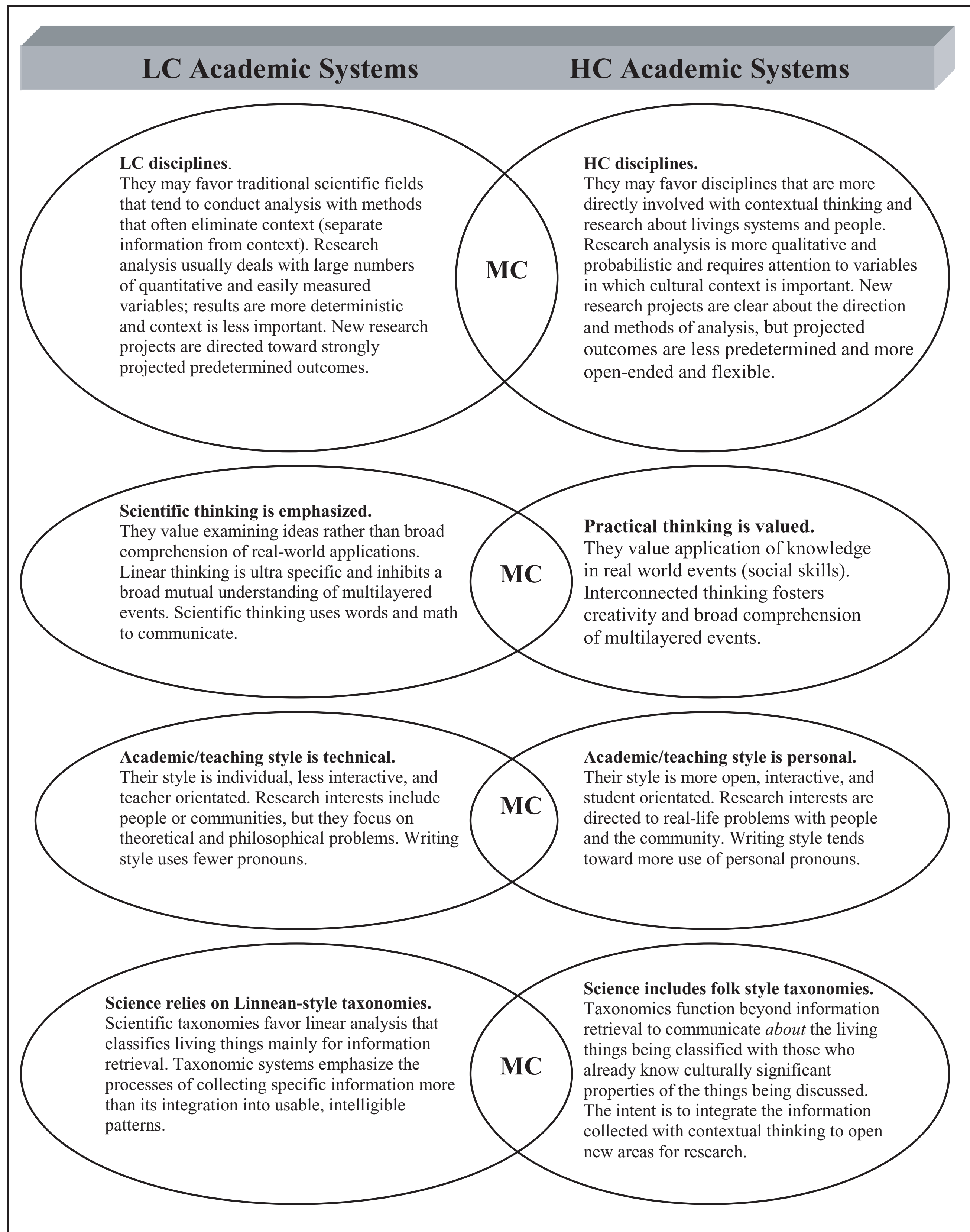

Low Context
LC Interaction
Multicontextual
High Context
HC Interaction
Low Use of nonverbal signals.
Their messages rely more on words than nonverbal cues. Body language is less highly developed with little attempt to synchronize with words
MC
High use of nonverbal signals.
Voice tone, facial expression, gesture, and eye expression all carry significant parts of a conversation. Body language is highly developed and synchronized with words.
Communication is Direct.
They appear to be blunt, even rude, in their directness. LC people spell things out exactly and value being specific. Getting to the main point quickly is highly valued.
MC
Communication is indirect.
They avoid getting to the main point of discussions quickly and talk around them to avoid being pushy. They embellish discussions and expect others to gather the main ideas fro the context provided.
Messages are literal.
Communication is a way of exchanging information, ideas, and opinions but is not intended to unify (identify or associate) culturally with others. Conversations reflect the occasion, but only one linguistic code is used
MC
Messages are an art form.
They see communication as a form of engaging another person, a unifying cultural activity that may include bilingual code switching (beginning or ending sentences or conversations in two languages).
Long-term interpersonal feedback
They avoid interfering with or intervening in others' lives. They take colleagues' mood shifts for granted, attributing them to personal problems that should be ignored.
MC
Short-term interpersonal feedback
Constant checking on emotional status of others is important for group morale. Though this characteristic is attributed to woman, HC people in general are especially attuned to slight mood changes among friends and colleagues.
Disagreement is depersonalized.
They withdraw from conflict and get on with the task. They depersonalize disagreement with a "tough it out" rather than "talk it out" approach. They defuse confrontation by quiet separation. (Force means communication breakdown).
MC
Disagreement is personalized.
They are sensitive to conflict and criticism expressed by another's verbal and nonverbal communication. They must resolve conflict before work can progress. They use a "talk it out" approach to defuse confrontation and unpleasantness, especially at work. (Force means communication)


LC Association
HC Association
Personal commitment to people is low.
Relationships start and end quickly. Many people can be inside one's circle, but boundaries are blurred. They are often highly committed to their job or career. Written contracts are important.
MC
Personal commitment to people is high.
Relationships depend on trust, build up slowly, and are stable. They are careful to distinguish who is in their circle. People are deeply involved with each other. They have a strong tendency to build lifetime relationships. Written contracts are less important than bonds of personal trust.
Task orientation.
Things get done when everyone follows policies and procedures and pays attention to a goal. Being nice to people is not necessary nor is it as important as completing the job.
MC
Process orientation.
Getting things done depends on one's relationship with people and attention to the group process. Being nice, courteous, and kind to people is more important than completing the job.
Success means being recognized.
They seek publicity and to stand out among their peers to "get ahead" in society. They value individualism and may ask for more information about someone's accomplishments.
MC
Success means being unobtrusive.
They seek less attention for their accomplishments. Talking about ones achievements is considered brash and boastful. They value humility, and LC people as being unassertive may misinterpret such passive behavior.
LC Temporality (Time)
HC Temporality (Time)
Time is monochromic (M-Time).
They emphasize schedules, compartmentalization, and promptness. They do one thing at a time and may equate time with money and status. Change happens fast.
• They do work on a schedule and do one thing at a time. Their intent is to do things quickly and see immediate results.
• They value speed and efficiency in work. The objective for learning and training is "getting up to speed".
• They concentrate on the job at hand.
• They take deadlines and schedules seriously.
• They adhere religiously to plans.
• They emphasize promptness. Being late sends a message about status or importance.
• They see people who juggle several tasks at one (P-time) as being totally disorganized
Time is polychronic (P-Time).
They emphasize people and completion of transactions. They do many things at one (multiple tasking) and do not equate time with money or status. Change happens slowly for things are rooted in the past.
• Because life has its own flow, they are reluctant to schedule time, cognizant that the needs of people may interfere with keeping to a schedule.
• They value accuracy and completion of a job. How well something is learned is more important than how soon or how fast.
• They are highly distractible and subject to interruptions at work.
• They regard deadlines and schedules as goals to be achieved if possible.
• They change plans often and easily.
• They value promptness if they know it is important to the relationship. Being late does not send a message.
• They perceive people who work in sequence as obsessive. Working collegially is more important than achieving working goals.


LC Temporality (Time)
HC Temporality (Time)
Time is a commodity.
Time can be spent, saved, or wasted. One's time is one's own.
MC
Time is a process.
Time is a part of nature; it belongs to everyone.
Synchrony is not important and tempo of life is faster.
They are less likely to consciously or unconsciously synchronize body movements while interacting with others (kinesics). The pace of life is hurried and individualized; synchronizing with others is not valued.
MC
Synchrony and tempo of life is slower.
Body movements while interacting with others are consciously and unconsciously synchronized. The absence of synchrony at work or performing with others may cause stress and tension. The pace of life is slower and synchronization with others is highly valued.
Culture relative to time is superficial.
They perceive culture as something that once can change, put on, or take off. Change mans discarding (excluding) old ways for new ones. Because they regard culture as a superficial difference, they have trouble accepting differences in others. They tend to expect others to be as willing to reshape their culture as they are.
MC
Culture relative to time is ingrained.
They perceive culture as an integral part of everyone and everything. Change means incorporating or adopting (including) new ways with old ones. Because they regard culture as ingrained, they are receptive to what is different in others, and they seldom expect others to reshape their culture.
Gender & LC Culture
Gender & HC Culture
M-Time cultures are formal (male orientated).
Formal culture is technical, highly scheduled, task orientated, concentrated, and imposing. Men shape the official worlds of business, government, entertainment and sports. Formal wisdom in professions like business and the law give minimal importance to informal culture.
MC
P-Time cultures are informal (female orientated).
Informal culture evolves over time from shared personal experiences that tie individuals to the group and its identity. It exists in all cultures. Communication is an informal process with no specific senders, receivers, or identifiable messages. Wisdom is group orientated.
Formal culture is team orientated.
Teams consist of individuals with specific skills who are brought together to work on projects or tasks. Their work may be linked, but it is sequential and compartmentalized (handled off to others).
MC
Informal culture is group orientated.
Individuals with general and/or specific skills come together to work as a group to complete projects. Work is interactive, and individuals are not territorial about specific tasks.


LC Territoriality (Space)
HC Territoriality (Space)
Space has more boundaries.
LC people need more social distance for interaction with little if any touching or contact during conversation. Personal space is compartmentalized, more individualized, and private.
MC
Space is more communal.
HC people are more comfortable interacting within close social distances, and constant non intimate touching during conversation is normal. Personal space is shared, and involvement with others is encouraged.
Privacy is more important.
They are concerned about not disturbing others and following social rules of privacy and consideration.
MC
Privacy is less important.
HC people are involved with those who are closely related (family, friends, close business associates) and have few concerns about privacy.
Personal property is shared less.
LC people tend to show great respect for private property. They seldom or reluctantly borrow or lend things.
MC
Personal property is shared more.
They respect private property but tend to borrow and lend things often and easily. My home is your home.
LC Information
HC Information
Information does not flow freely.
Data are highly focused and compartmentalized. They make relatively low use of personal information networks.
MC
Information spreads rapidly.
It moves as if it has a life of its own. They make relatively significant use of multiple personal information networks.
Information can be separated from context.
They can separate two, an artifact primarily of Western analytical science
MC
Information without context is meaningless. They prefer information in context; otherwise, it is unreliable.


LC Learning
HC Learning
Knowledge is obtained by logical reasoning.
A rational step-by-step model of scientific analysis yields information. Reality is elemental, fragmented, compartmentalized and thus easier to isolate for analysis.
MC
Knowledge is obtained by a gestalt model.
Facts are perceived as complete units (gestalts) embedded in the context of situations or experiences; they can be recalled as wholes, and they are not easily separated for analysis. Things are interconnected, synthesized, and global.
Analytical thinking is important.
They prefer an inductive reasoning process, to go from the specific to the general. They focus on compiling details. They have difficulty translating their thinking process into symbols so that comprehensive thinkers can easily understand it.
MC
Comprehensive thinking is important.
They prefer deductive reasoning, to go from general to specific. They use expanded thinking ("big picture" actions, ideas, and/or complex forms). They have few problems translating their thinking processes symbolically (nonverbally) for others to understand.
They learn best by following directions.
They assemble or combine facts according to rule they memorize. Things are spelled out with explicit explanations even in an apprenticeship model. Theoretical and philosophical problems are treated as real.
MC
They learn best by demonstration.
They learn by hands-on methods: observing and mimicking others, practicing it mentally and physically, demonstrating it to others, and by apprenticeship. Real life problems are as important as theoretical and philosophical ones.
Learning is orientated toward the individual.
They prefer to approach tasks and learning individually. They tend to work and learn apart from others. Teamwork means individuals are assigned specific tasks to accomplish.
MC
Learning is group oriented.
They prefer to work in groups to learn and solve problems. Some groups prefer constant talking (interacting) in close proximity when working or learning
Creative learning process is externalized.
They prefer to learn or create complex knowledge like mathematics externally—with the aid of pens, paper, books, computers, and so on. The learning process is highly visible and accessible for others to evaluate and correct. Externalized creative processes help to speed up change, but they are slower and less productive than internalized processes.
MC
Creative learning process is internalized.
They may be capable of learning or creating complex knowledge like mathematics or music in their heads rather than by using learning extensions like pen and paper. The creative learning process is comprehensive, and integrating complex ideas can happen all at once. Internalized creative processes are less visible for others to evaluate and correct, but they are much faster and more productive than externalized process.


LC Academic Systems
HC Academic Systems
LC disciplines.
They may favor traditional scientific fields that tend to conduct analysis with methods that often eliminate context (separate information from context). Research analysis usually deals with large numbers of quantitative and easily measured variables; results are more deterministic and context is less important. New research projects are directed toward strongly projected predetermined outcomes.
MC
HC disciplines.
They may favor disciplines that are more directly involved with contextual thinking and research about livings systems and people. Research analysis is more qualitative and probabilistic and requires attention to variables in which cultural context is important. New research projects are clear about the direction and methods of analysis, but projected outcomes are less predetermined and more open-ended and flexible.
Scientific thinking is emphasized.
They value examining ideas rather than broad comprehension of real-world applications. Linear thinking is ultra specific and inhibits a broad mutual understanding of multilayered events. Scientific thinking uses words and math to communicate.
MC
Practical thinking is valued.
They value application of knowledge in real world events (social skills). Interconnected thinking fosters creativity and broad comprehension of multilayered events.
Academic/teaching style is technical.
Their style is individual, less interactive, and teacher orientated. Research interests include people or communities, but they focus on theoretical and philosophical problems. Writing style uses fewer pronouns.
MC
Academic/teaching style is personal.
Their style is more open, interactive, and student orientated. Research interests are directed to real-life problems with people and the community. Writing style tends toward more use of personal pronouns.
Science relies on Linnean-style taxonomies.
Scientific taxonomies favor linear analysis that classifies living things mainly for information retrieval. Taxonomic systems emphasize the processes of collecting specific information more than its integration into usable, intelligible patterns.
MC
Science includes folk style taxonomies.
Taxonomies function beyond information retrieval to communicate about the living things being classified with those who already know culturally significant properties of the things being discussed. The intent is to integrate the information collected with contextual thinking to open new areas for research.