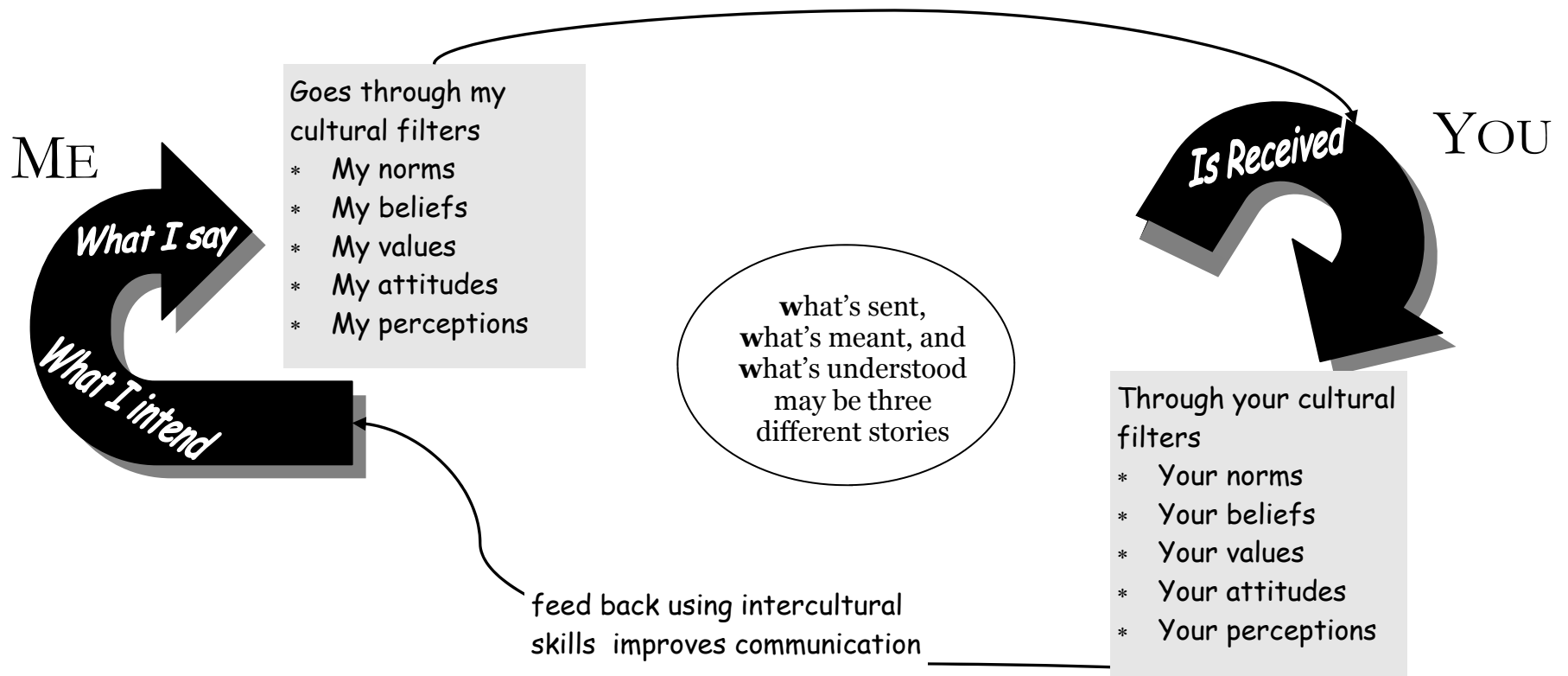


# Communicating Effectively in a Culturally Diverse Meeting

*Take a look at this communication model to see what is involved in truly understanding what we are intending to communicate to one another.*



## My Filters

Each of us has a set of dimensions that affect our experience and shape our perceptions. These dimensions include our:

- \* gender
- \* race
- \* ethnicity
- \* age
- \* sexual orientation
- \* family status
- \* socioeconomic status
- \* religion
- \* physical ability
- \* military experience
- \* education
- \* geographic location

Our responses, based on our cultural filters, can become automatic behavior and beyond our conscious awareness.

A few brief examples of differing cultural filters which shape the way one views the world  
(there are countless other examples)

1. Value difference in how humans relate to nature

- ◆ Humans are in control of nature
- ◆ Humans live in harmony with nature
- ◆ Humans are subject to the forces of nature

2. Belief differences about men and women

- ◆ Men and women are equal
- ◆ Men are dominant; women are submissive
- ◆ Women are dominant; men are submissive

In The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently...and Why, Richard Nisbett described research in which American and Japanese students saw the same animated underwater scene differently. Americans focused on the big fish swimming among smaller fish while the Japanese observed the background environment. This experiment led Nisbett on a journey of uncovering the cognitive differences between Westerners and East Asians. He learned: ...to the Asian, the world is a complex place, composed of continuous substances, understandable in terms of the whole rather than in terms of the parts, and subject more to collective than to personal control. To the Westerner, the world is a relatively simple place, composed of discrete objects that can be understood without undue attention to context, and highly subject to personal control. Very different worlds indeed (p. 100).

## **Intercultural Communication Skills**

To enhance our ability to understand one another

1. Know myself as a cultural self. Become aware of my attitudes, perceptions, norms, beliefs, and values and how they play out in my interaction with others.
2. Know that others have a cultural self which may include a **different** set of values, beliefs, norms, attitudes and perceptions which are just as valid as mine. A conceptual understanding of these differences increases awareness and understanding.
3. Develop the ability to suspend judgment so as to be open and listen for understanding.
4. Reframe what I say so that my intention is clear and is understood by others.
5. Create mutually adaptive decisions so that all are honored and respected.

To learn more, read

Schauber, Ann C. (2002) *Working with Differences in Communities*. Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Extension Service.

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